

MEN AND MANNERS,

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY FRANCIS LATHOM,

AUTHOR OF

THE MIDNIGHT BELL, CASTLE OF OLLADA, &c.

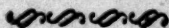
VOL. II.

*"I sit down to write what I think; not to think what
I shall write."*

CERVANTES.

DUBLIN,

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MEN AND MANNERS.

CHAP. I.

"The Monkey who had seen the World."

THE first word Sir Gilbert uttered on the driving off of Lady Paragon's carriage, was an order to his servants, never again to admit John Morden into his house, on any pretext whatever: he next ascended into the apartment where he had left his daughter and Rachel; and the complacent deportment of his noble guests having in some measure softened down the bile raised in him by the intrusion of his plebeian visitor, he sufficiently controuled himself to speak in terms tolerably cool, whilst he informed Eliza, that he was convinced of John Morden being her favoured lover; and resolved that she should not in future, till after her marriage with Sir Bauble, stir a single step, not even to walk in the garden of the square, unguarded by Lady Paragon or himself.

The charge of love, which her father had brought against her, Miss Oxmondeley felt too true, to be able easily to collect words for attempting to confute; from avowing the real sentiments of her heart, and throwing herself upon his mercy, his violent denunciation at Fairford deterred her: thus she listened in silence, nor attempted to sue in defence of her threatened liberty; knowing that apparent compliance was more likely than contradiction to induce Sir Gilbert to relax the restraint he had declared himself about to impose upon her movements.

Sir Bauble's conduct, during his visit at Sir Gilbert's, convinced Rachel, that he intended seriously

to address her friend ; a conviction which would have left her no longer any room to doubt the libertinism of his intentions in addressing her at the masquerade, had not his familiarity with the female at the theatre tended to corroborate it past all possibility of error. Well aware, that a relation of what had passed that evening between Sir Bauble and herself would not be credited, at least not regarded, by Sir Gilbert, under the impressions which now so strongly biased him, and thus, that its disclosure would only increase the anxiety of Miss Oxmondeley by the addition of wrongs for which she could gain no redress, she wisely resolved to bury the past in silence in her own breast.—She was not the too common female friend, who must communicate all she knows to the partner of her bosom, whether the intelligence brings pain or pleasure :—she was the true friend, who modulated communication by reason, and proved herself worthy the name she valued.

Once only did Rachel waver in her opinion of the rectitude of her proceeding.—A true friend perhaps, she thought, ought to retain tidings neither of joy nor anxiety from her fellow :—she paused a moment on the thought. A question rose in her mind, which happily silenced her doubts—“ Can it be the part of true friend to wound the feelings of her whom she calls by so sacred a name ?—Oh, no ! it must be criminal to sting, when we have no balm to relieve the smart.”

Miss Oxmondeley's affliction had only one consolation—there had been heroines more woe-begone than herself, who had been ultimately happy with the man they loved ; but then she was particularly miserable in being ignorant whether the object of her affections returned the love she bore him :—she formed a plan which afforded her a gleam of hope and solace ; she called Rachel hastily into her chamber, to communicate it to her :—she hesitated, began ; she hesitated again ; and at length resolved to give it a night's cool reflection, ere she imparted it to her friend.

On

On the following morning, before Sir Bauble visited the baronet, numerous presents arrived, in his name, for Miss Oxmondeley; pictures, medals, statues, and various Herculean fragments. The pictures, medals, statues, gained Sir Gilbert's admiration, tho' not his daughter's; but in the antique and disfigured vases, he was compelled to own, though Sir Bauble's presents, he could see no beauty: "they looked to him for all the world like damaged crockery; but he supposed that all the pieces were there, and that they would be curious when mended; he dared to say they had got damaged in bringing over, for Sir Bauble could never have brought home broken pots and pans for curiosities."

Two o'clock brought Sir Bauble, who was received by Sir Gilbert in his study. Few words served to ratify a bargain to which both parties were inclined. Sir Gilbert, in the height of his transport, increased his daughter's portion from twenty to thirty thousand pounds. Sir Bauble mentioned a settlement adequate to the liberality of his intended bride's father; and Blackman, whom Sir Gilbert had contrived to have in waiting, was called in to take down notes for the future employment of his pen.

This important business being arranged, Sir Bauble was conducted to Miss Oxmondeley's dressing room by her father, with an introductory speech to the following purport, delivered during their passage to it from Sir Gilbert's sanctum:—"My daughter, Sir Bauble, is an excellent girl, I must assure you, as time will prove to you, and highly sensible of the very fortunate alliance she is about to make; I hope you will not think her cool or indifferent to it, because she may appear shy or reserved—it is merely her bashfulness, because you are quite a stranger to her; and rather excusable too, I think, Sir Bauble, if it had no other cause than the present occasion; but, between you and me, Sir Bauble, diffidence was always one of our family failings."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" Sir Bauble answered, "a most adorable girl; I had often seen her with admiration before I went abroad; and, 'pon honour, strange as the coincidence of our uncommunicated sentiments may seem, it was my serious intention to aspire to Miss Oxmondeley's hand on my return."

"Very strange! very odd indeed, that we should both think alike; very odd!—but very pleasant and fortunate; eh, Sir Bauble?"

"Oh, beyond utterance; most delectably fortunate!"

Presented to Miss Oxmondeley by her father as her future husband, Sir Bauble imprinted on her lips the first rapturous kiss of enviable, happy love; and then, throwing himself upon a sofa near a window into which the rays of the sun shone obliquely, he exclaimed, "Why don't you get Venetian blinds? there's no existing without them, to us who have lived in Italy."

"Shall I drop the curtain, Sir Bauble?" asked Sir Gilbert, rising.

"Oh no, by no means; no, positively, you sha'n't for me."

"Then change places with me, Sir Bauble.—I must say, this snowy frosty weather, I think a little sunshine is pleasant."

Sir Bauble rose, and walked to the window hastily, with a look of inquiry:—"Gad, and so it has snowed, now you mention it; but, upon my veracity, after having crossed the Alps, we pass over a snow of half a dozen feet deep, without remarking what we tread upon."

"Indeed!" cried Sir Gilbert, with a look that implied, "Well, it must be a much more wonderful thing to be a great traveller, than ever I gave it credit for being."

Sir Bauble seated himself next Eliza; and, taking her hand in his, he said, "What do you do with yourself this morning? will you air in my curriole? it will be here in a few minutes."

"I am

"I am afraid the air is too cold, to-day, for an open carriage," she answered.

"I suppose they have not got into the way of wearing masks here, have they, while I have been gone?—I wonder the fashion is not introduced; it is extremely comfortable, and convenient too! Ah, troppo cara Venicia!"

"Pray, Sir Bauble," asked Sir Gilbert, "did you see the Pope?"

"The Pope, Sir Gilbert?" replied Sir Bauble; the Pope? upon my veracity, I can't at this instant recollect whether it was the Pope or the Doge of Venice, that a severe cold obliged me to disappoint at dinner: but I had cards from both; and perfectly remember, I visited one; I think, the Doge:—yes, it must have been the Doge; but my memory is often treacherous in these little instances."

"I'll tell you how I think you might bring it into your mind," said Sir Gilbert; if you could remember whether you kissed his toe or not."

"That's an honour I don't recollect."

"Why then, I think, by what I have heard travellers say, it could not have been the Pope."

"No; I dare say it must have been the Doge," answered Sir Bauble; and, ringing the bell, he continued: "Will you permit me to order a glass of water?"

"You are at home here, Sir Bauble; and I beg you would consider yourself so on every occasion; but, if you are thirsty, give me leave to offer a glass of sherry, or cherry-brandy, or ale, or——"

"Oh, pardon; no, I never moisten my lips in a morning."

The water was brought; and Sir Bauble, having poured into it a few drops from a phial which he took from his pocket, drank it, and then inquired whether his horses were at the door; and being answered in the affirmative, he drew on his gloves, and, whilst he turned to the glass to put on his hat,—"You positively won't ride, then, this morning?" he said.

"Not

"Not to-day," answered Miss Oxmondeley.

"Patience par force," he pretended to sigh out; and after an adieu, equally tender with the foregoing scene, he left the apartment in anticipating his next happy visit; Sir G. following, and reminding him that he hoped to be honoured with his and Lady Paragon's company the next day at dinner, according to the invitation he had that morning sent them; which Sir Bauble having promised they would accept, entered his vehicle, gave the signal to his horses to proceed, and darted forward to exhibit the tout-ensemble in Bond-street.

CHAP. II.

A Peep behind the Curtain.

IT may now be thought necessary to return to the period of Sir Bauble's landing in England from his continental tour, and to give some account of the motive by which he was actuated in so readily accepting Sir Gilbert's unaccountable proposal of an alliance with his daughter.

It has already been said, that when Lady Paragon received our Baronet's first visit, she entertained no slight hope of a matrimonial address to herself being its instigator. In this hope we have also said that vanity had a share; but there was still a more cogent motive: it was not an idea of deriving any additional consequence from the title of Lady Oxmondeley; her own was already of equal weight:—it was not her love of a married state; for of that she had been long weary before she was happily released from it by the death of Sir Oliver Paragon;—it was, gentle reader, that she happened to be at that period in an
unfortunate

unfortunate situation, but too well known by many women of fashion, and much too leniently treated by the world ;—involved in a crowd of gaming debts, from which she had no present means of extricating herself. Her jointure had been expended, as far as it was already become due to her, to silence her creditors in trade, and quiet her more formidable foes the bailiffs; and her income, for fifteen years to come, was mortgaged at a sum very inferior to its worth; as it was not expected, from her dissipated course of life, that she could live out the term bargained for :—thus, her only hope, after the disappointment of her views on Sir Gilbert, for the time being at least, was in the liberality of her son, whom her impatience to see and solicit carried to meet him at Dover.

The first calm moment, after the transports of meeting between mother and son subsided, Lady Paragon seized to unfold her tale of woe : but guess her astonishment, when Sir Bauble, to whom she had flown as her guardian-angel, from the insults of bailiffs, and disgrace of a prison, declared his circumstances, to speak in the fashionable phrase of such unfortunates, to be as much deranged as those of his lady mother !

Silent astonishment occupied the first few minutes which succeeded this melancholy disclosure ; each looked to the other for consolation : Lady Paragon then recollected that she possessed a clue to the ways and means ; and laid before her son the propositions of Sir Gilbert, which he waited not her advice to declare he should immediately accept.

One difficulty still remained :—“ How were they to ensure their liberty and the concealment of their circumstances, till the marriage could be brought into effect ?” asked Lady Paragon.

Sir Bauble proposed a question still more difficult to be resolved :—“ How must he act to prevent even the idea of the marriage with Miss Oxmondeley being entirely done away, as Sir Gilbert would doubtless investigate his circumstances, before he gave him his daughter ?”

"There was but one way," Lady Paragon answered: "it was a hazardous one, she allowed; but they were at that point," she added, "where they must hazard every thing, or lose every thing."

Sir Bauble acquiesced, and asked his mother to explain.

"I have some knowledge," she replied, "of Sir Gilbert. Oxmondeley's chief agent and adviser, Blackman, the lawyer;—I think, by a little adroit management, he may be brought over to forward our views, and not betray us. I have still some plate which I can convert into money for buying him; if that is not sufficient, you may give him a trifling mortgage on part of the fortune you will obtain with Miss Oxmondeley on your marriage, and a promissory note for a further sum on the death of Sir Gilbert."

Lady Paragon, it will be remarked, in the present instance, laid aside her excessive sensibility; she neither fell into an hysseric, nor were her nerves violently fluttered by the discovery of the state to which she and her son were reduced: she was experiencing real anxiety and mortification; which, in those who adapt their feelings to being too violently overcome by trifles, seldom produce so strong effects as in others, who can witness the every day occurrences of life unmoved.

Sir Bauble acceded to the proposed plan, and they immediately set out for London; contriving to arrive there at a late hour in the evening, and commanding the servants to keep their return secret.

It was determined to dispatch a note to Blackman that night, requesting his attendance on Lady Paragon early the following morning; and also, that she should write it, in order that he might not suspect Sir Bauble was arrived, and communicate the intelligence to Sir Gilbert before their plans were ripe for operation.

The following morning brought Blackman at the appointed hour. "The late Sir Oliver had been his employer: thus, he considered himself bound," he said, "to wait with punctuality on her ladyship."

Against

Against his arrival, Lady Paragon had put on the softness of extreme grief; and in a most pathetic harangue, with "dear Mr. Blackman" subjoined to every third word, narrated the misfortunes of Sir Bauble and herself.

Mr. Blackman was vexed, grieved, mortified, cut to the soul, at hearing of the misfortunes of the relicts of his most excellent friend Sir Oliver: he wished he could assist them: they had his good-will: he could not tell how strongly! "Oh! that it had but pleased kind Heaven to make him rich enough to extricate his much respected friends from their difficulties! but he had a large family—seven children---times were bad, prodigiously bad with him: they always were so with honest, pains-taking men; but never less favourable to industry than now, especially in his line of business: he could barely live himself, and that was all. If it was not for good friends, more than business, he did not know how he should be able to make both ends meet: his chin was just above water, and not an inch more."

This harangue, which he connected too closely to suffer an interruption from the baronet or his mother, was intended to convey, that if Lady Paragon meant to borrow, he was not inclined to lend.

"Worthy man!" exclaimed Lady Paragon, whilst Blackman stopped to breathe—"Worthy man! I said you would be my friend; I pity your confined circumstances; why did you not apply to me?—Unfortunate as I am myself, I have still a mite to spare for my friends in distress—and, what is the same, for my poor dear dead Sir Oliver's friend."—She opened her pocket-book. "It was but a mite, though," she said; "but time might give her the ability to make it more: she wished it a hundred, a thousand, a million times more." During the last words, a note for a hundred pounds passed from the fingers of Lady Paragon into the hand of Blackman.

"He could not, he could not, indeed," he replied, "be indebted for his own relief from emergencies,

gencies, to the bounty of those he was grieved to see unfortunate themselves: it would certainly make him, his wife, his children, all happy;—but then——”

“It will make me happy, too,” said Lady Paragon.

“It brought tears into his eyes,” he returned.—

“Oh, that the world was blessed with a few more Lady Paragons!—What could he say?—what could he do? whither could he run to serve his adored benefactress?”

Lady Paragon replied, that she asked only his secrecy in return, with regard to what she was about to communicate to him.

“Oh, he would cut his tongue out! die upon the rack! before he would betray a woman of such exalted principles!—No, upon his soul, what she then might say, should never pass his lips.”

“She sincerely hoped not: for her character, the only thing she really valued in the world, was at stake; would be committed to his mercy, to his discretion, in the disclosure she was about to make to him.”

“Sacred, indeed, is such a trust; none but a villain could betray it: he hoped he had never borne the name; he had never deserved it, he was sure: but the best of people had enemies, who slandered them; and lest any doubt should remain, he would give her his promise upon oath.”—He moved to the book-case.

“What are you looking for?” asked Lady Paragon.

“Only going to reach down this bible, my Lady.”

“No; it—it—it is not a bible,” answered Lady Paragon: “it was quite by mistake: the binding, somehow—I don’t know how, is wrong: it is Tom Jones.”

“The prayer-book was next; and that would do.”

“Oh dear! no; it was all a mistake; a blunder of the man that bound them: it was ‘*Les Egarements du Cœur et de l’Esprit*.’ His word was enough—she did not doubt his faith.”

“Oh,

"Oh, I must swear!" Blackman replied; "it was so essential a trust, he must put its revelation past doubt: any religious book would do."

She feared there was none there.

A missal, Sir Bauble had brought from the continent, fortunately lay on the chimney-piece; and with a fervent kiss, the lawyer upon that took his oath of secrecy.

Lady Paragon then opened her plan: Blackman listened to its detail with the most unwearied attention; and, when it was ended, still continued silent. Lady Paragon fixed her inquiring eyes on him for some moments, and then asked:—"Well, Mr. Blackman, what do you think, Sir?"

"Why, my Lady, the plan is very skilfully drawn out; very, very. I have already said, it is my duty to stretch every nerve to serve your Ladyship; and when a man says, such or such a thing is his duty, he certainly ought not to hesitate its performance; but, as your Ladyship well knows, a man in my line of business cannot live by a single friend, however good that friend may be: if it pleased Heaven always to spare Lady Paragon, indeed! I wish it had been any body else: Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley has been so kind a patron, so worthy a friend to me!"

"Then you despair, Mr. Blackman," her Ladyship was beginning to say, when he interrupted her by continuing:

"I know all Sir Gilbert's most intimate concerns, in me he places implicit confidence; he has found me capable of material trusts: I manage all his affairs: it is a weighty undertaking, as your Ladyship may suppose."

"If you were really willing to serve me, you confess the power is in your hands, then, Mr. Blackman—don't you, Mr. Blackman?"

"A weighty undertaking, indeed," continued Blackman, without seeming to attend to Lady Paragon's last speech: "but he is a generous man: Sir Gilbert pays me nobly for my numerous pains."

Lady

Lady Paragon remarked that Sir Gilbert was old ; that his generosity must end with his life ; that her son would be able and willing to be an equally liberal friend, and of a much longer continuance.

Blackman sighed, and shook his head.

Lady Paragon raised her handkerchief to her eyes. "In your good or bad will towards us, dear Mr. Blackman, consider that the ruin or happiness of myself and my darling son depends ; let us bless your kindness, rather than execrate your unfeeling heart. I have a silver urn, that I mean to present to Mrs. Blackman ; and I am sure you had rather have the pleasing sensation of having given its poor bestower a light heart, than the dreadful one of having driven her into the jaws of a prison, accompany it to your tea-table."

Blackman raised his handkerchief to his eyes.— "He perceived," he said, "that his duty was divided ; conscience split between Sir Gilbert and her Ladyship : he must lean one way, of his own accord ; and instinct refused to point out one to him. Heaven forgive him if he did wrong in inclining to the side of the defenceless widow and orphan !"

"Worthy, worthy man !" exclaimed Lady Paragon ; and nipped his hand in hers, leaving in it another hundred pound note.

The arrangement of matters which it was necessary to put in immediate train followed this happy composition. The money which Lady Paragon and her son required for their present exigencies, Blackman promised to procure for them of a friend in the city ; but the terms of usury were at that time so exorbitantly high, that he assured them they might themselves fortunate, if they obtained it at fifty or sixty per cent.

Sir Bauble then gave Blackman a promissory note for five thousand pounds, to be paid on the day of his marriage with Miss Oxmondeley, and an equal sum on his inheriting Sir Gilbert's fortune.

Matters of smaller importance, next came upon the carpet.

The

The first of these was advice from Blackman to Lady Paragon and her son, to comfort themselves in the presence of Sir Gilbert, as if they esteemed the alliance with his family an honour conferred on them—but to lose no opportunity of raising in his opinion their rank and consequence in life. Sir Bauble next inquired of Blackman some account of his intended bride, which Blackman delivered consistently with truth; that she was averse to be forced into the arms of a man whom she had never seen. Sir Bauble expressed no wonder; nor was it a matter he much troubled himself about: all he wished, he said, was once to see her before she knew him in his real character. Blackman mentioned the Viscountess of Domino's masquerade, which was that evening to take place: Sir Bauble adopted the idea with eagerness; and a couple of tickets having been procured for him, he repaired thither in the habit of a counsellor, determining not to make himself known to any one; and, taking with him his French valet and confidant, in the character of a harlequin.

Knowing the dress Miss Oxmondeley was to wear, he easily discovered her: her person and figure both pleased him; and he felt tolerably content in the anticipation of his "*femme Anglaise*," but in Rachel there was a combination of beauty without the consciousness of possessing it, and a naïveté of speech without want of delicacy, that lighted in his breast the flame of libertinism; and, unaccustomed to restrain his inclinations, he burnt to possess her, nor feared the accomplishment of his wish, if mortal means could gain it for him.

Who she was, he had no opportunity of inquiring. Seeing her leave the room with Miss Oxmondeley, a clue to discovery was given him, which he waited not a moment to use; and, late as the hour was, he repaired to Blackman's, who rose to let him in.

"Who was the novice that had accompanied Miss Oxmondeley to the masquerade?" he asked, after an apology for disturbing the lawyer's repose.

"A young lady, at that time on a visit to Miss Oxmondeley."

"Who was she?"

Blackman

Blackman knew not.

"From whence?"

He knew not.

"It must then be his immediate business to learn, and to make an inquiry so as to defy suspicion of the cause."

Blackman, ever ready to serve his liberal friends, promised to use his utmost endeavours, and Sir Bauble then returned home.

On the following morning, as had been pre-determined between the parties, Blackman, as we have already said, repaired to Sir Gilbert's to inform him of the arrival of the young baronet; at which time he took an opportunity of inviting Mrs. Coke to drink tea that afternoon with his wife, to whom he had entrusted to draw from her all she knew concerning Rachel.

Sir Bauble having retired to rest at a very late, or rather a very early hour, was only in his first nap when Sir Gilbert arrived to welcome his return to England; and this was the cause of our baronet's being refused admission at Lady Paragon's.

From Mrs. Coke, Mrs. Blackman learnt, that Miss Rachel, as she was always called, was a poor relation of the curate of a neighbouring parish to Fairford; and that Miss Oxmondeley having taken a great fancy to Miss, she had been on a visit at Fairford the greater part of the last summer, and was now come to stay the winter with the family in London; "rather, as you may suppose, Ma'am," added Mrs. Coke, "in the light of an humble companion."

This was information enough for Sir Bauble: in the possession of Miss Oxmondeley's fortune and Rachel's person, he foresaw himself the happiest of mortals; and Blackman was immediately ordered to plan a scheme for entrapping her virtue.

Thus prepared, by knowing whom he should meet on his first visit at Sir Gilbert's, a man who had passed through the various scenes of gallantry, in which Sir Bauble's purse had assisted to engage him, found no difficulty

difficulty in adopting a conduct that could bid defiance to suspicion of a former acquaintance with the party to whom he was then introduced.

One matter, however, Blackman determined to see concluded before he spared a moment from its arrangement to tamper with Rachel :—this was the concordance of Sir Gilbert and Sir Bauble on their meeting relative to articles of the proposed marriage—and, by the adroitness of the lawyer, Sir Gilbert satisfied himself with the liberal promises of Sir Bauble, in regard to a settlement for his daughter, without offering to investigate his capability of fulfilling them.

Sir Gilbert believed Blackman too true to his interest to deceive him in so material a point ; and so the lawyer had thought himself, till a superior magnet had drawn him over to an opposite interest. He did not set out with deceiving his patron ; for when he told him that Sir Bauble was possessed of five or six thousand pounds per annum, he actually believed him to be worth that sum, as he had left the kingdom with it in his pocket ; and only meant to curry additional favour with Sir Gilbert, by promoting a marriage for his daughter agreeable to his wishes. Now Sir Bauble returned penniless, the lawyer probably drew in his own mind a professional quirk, that it was still in Sir Gilbert's interest he was working, for the ultimate reward of his labours was to be Sir Gilbert's money ; and what else is interest all the world over ?

CHAP. III.

Plots and Plans.

THE plan to which Miss Oxmondeley had resolved to give a night of deliberation, additional thought rendered to her imagination only more desirable and more easily to be effected; and when does not reflection, on a point we have once determined to be desirable, seem to remove the difficulties and heighten the pleasures attendant on its execution?

Sir Bauble's two first visits, by comparison with another object, had raised a disgust even against his person, which was really handsome, in the mind of Miss Oxmondeley; and, repairing to Rachel's chamber on the instant of Sir Bauble's quitting her after his second visit, she thus laid open to her friend the stratagem she had planned to avoid becoming his wife.

"Well, my dear Rachel, I have been again thinking upon what I mentioned slightly to you last night, and I have resolved;—I have determined to make a hazardous attempt to escape this wretch Sir Bauble."

She paused an instant, as if wishing to be urged to proceed.

"Well, my dear, what do you propose?" asked Rachel.

Miss Oxmondeley hesitated a moment, then suddenly exclaimed: "Why should I blush to own to you my most secret intentions? I am sure you'll not betray me; you are too good, too tender a friend. I know you will blame my design, I know you will; you must; but the struggle between love and hatred will kill me, if I don't give it vent!" The tears burst into her eyes, and she stopped to wipe them away. "Tell me truly," she again began; "don't you think John Morden, a fine, handsome, spirited young fellow?"

"And

"And what if I should say I thought him tolerably so?" asked Rachel, fearing she saw too deeply into her friend's intention.

"Don't you think," continued Eliza, "a woman must be happy with such a man?" Again she paused.

"Pray go on," replied Rachel; "give me the whole of your view at once, and I shall be the better able to return you my opinion."

"Did not you hear what I said the day before yesterday? that he hoped to exchange his profession for a more honourable one before he died;—I spoke in favour of the army too, you must recollect, and he looked me such thanks, and sighed me such applause for my commendation;—Oh! he must, he would adore a woman who could place him in the situation he so ardently aspires to hold!—Yes! I will write to him a full explanation of my heart; if he pities it, I have sufficient jewels to raise the price of a commission, and fly with him from paternal tyranny; Oh! enviable, extatic blifs! If his breast be adamant, I will wear out my too susceptible heart in tears within the cold flinty walls of a convent, and think them the emblems of his frosty bosom!"

Towards the conclusion of this sentence, reflection on real evils, combined with the imagery of fictitious horrors, so far oppressed the spirits of Miss Oxmondeley, that she fell backwards into her chair; her last words were scarcely articulate: and the application of salts to her nostrils was necessary to retain life within her.

On reviving, she clasped Rachel's hand in hers—"Oh my dear friend! don't refuse to be the partner of my flight," she cried.

"Let me entreat you to calm your spirits," returned Rachel, "and listen to my advice."

"Don't advise me to be miserable; don't be so cruel," she returned.

"I advise you," replied Rachel, "from every motive that can actuate the conduct of a woman of character, to lay aside all thoughts of this imprudent

dent step.—First, as to the opinion of the world; does not a clandestine marriage uniformly carry with it a tacit acknowledgement of its own impropriety?"

"Say rather," exclaimed Miss Oxmondeley, "that it carries with it an evidence against the severity of those who compel us to adopt it, by aiming to deprive us of the exercise of the most exalted sentiment of the heart, free and generous love."

"I will say no more of the world, then," replied Rachel, "but endeavour to bring the argument home to your own feelings: you have not the most slender reason to suppose that this man's sentiments are at this time in unison with yours, or that he will have any motive for becoming your husband, beyond that of its being the means of obtaining him a situation in life he is emulous of holding, and to which he cannot otherwise attain; and should he, for there are dispositions which are most repulsive when most courted, not meet your proposal with the ardour in which it is made, how could you brook a refusal in so tender a point, or what hold could you have upon his secrecy for preserving your character unblemished?"

"Without him I must be miserable," answered Miss Oxmondeley: "and I had rather be wretched in certainty than in doubt."

"You could not be unhappy without a secret consolation to cheer you," said Rachel, "while you possess the knowledge of not having acted towards the production of your own fate.—But to place your intention in a fairer view; suppose John Morden to accept your hand with all the rapture you could desire him to do; love founded on a much firmer basis has its cool moments. What permanence of affection can you promise yourself from a man who never felt the passion towards you, till you bribed him into conceiving, or rather perhaps pretending, it warmed his heart?—The all you possess will be expended in the purchase of his commission; a slender provision, when procured, to you who have lived in the midst of profusion:—no forgiveness, no assistance, to be expected from either of your fathers: and mutual inconveniences

niences which do not now appear to you, but will too soon come upon you, instead of fanning the flame of love into a warmer glow, will only chill the little heat it once possessed. I need not enlarge on what consolation or happiness will then remain to you on the reflection of your rash conduct, and your inability to retrace the steps you have trodden."

Miss Oxmondeley wept; they were not the tears of contrition, for her mind was bent too strongly to her wishes to be easily drawn over to an opposite opinion, by a gloomy picture of the future being set before her eyes; they were tears of sorrow, that she could not accomplish her darling plan with a greater certainty of happiness to herself.

By much earnest persuasion Rachel prevailed on her to postpone either writing to John Morden or converting her jewels into money until the following week, and to give the interval to more full consideration: a plan which Eliza agreed to adopt; because, as her father had not yet fixed any period for her marriage with Sir Bauble, she knew it would not ultimately obstruct the execution of her views, and also because she hoped the interval might bring forward some adventure to assist her intentions or console her sorrows.

CHAP. IV.

Execution.

THE three days subsequent to this conversation passed without any material occurrence: on the fourth as Miss Oxmondeley was looking from her dressing-room window, which commanded a view of the square, who should pass it but John Morden, and another young man in a handsome gig, which, by John Morden being the driver, she immediately concluded to be his.

He

He kissed his hand to her in passing, and at the corner of the square looked back and bowed.—Miss Oxmondeley quivered every limb.—“John Morden must have passed her father’s house, solely with the hope of seeing her, no other business could have called him into that square, and she was now resolved to put her plan in execution.”

Two circumstances however tended yet a short time to delay it: on the fourth night from the present day, namely on the Friday, Lady Paragon had fixed to give a brilliant ball to her numerous acquaintance, at which she was to appear as Sir Bauble’s bride: her father would of course expect her to wear her jewels on that evening; therefore if she sold them before that time, and had not an opportunity of escaping to John Morden before the hour at which she would be expected to appear in them, her intentions must unavoidably be discovered and for ever frustrated.—And to John Morden she could not immediately fly, as she had still his abode to find out, a matter to her, in her present confined state, not very easy to be performed; however she determined, as was most necessary to her views, to make that her first and immediate care;—two guineas accordingly were given by her as a bribe to one of her father’s footmen, who undertook to go to the hospital John Morden was then walking, and learn from the secretary where he lodged.—Her messenger returned with the desired information, and faithfully promised her his secrecy.

When night arrived, and Miss Oxmondeley had retired to her chamber, she dedicated the hours of sleep to her pen, and having, after many attempts, succeeded tolerably to her wishes in composing a romantic epistle, calculated to melt the heart of him she addressed, and having, as she imagined, secured his secrecy, by laying before him in the most glaring colours, the indelible dishonour that must attach itself to the character of a man who could be sufficiently base to betray the wakeness of a woman’s love, ended by directing him, if he condemned her to
eternal

eternal misery, to send her doom enclosed in a cover to Rachel; if he met her proposal, to remain in his lodgings the whole of the following Saturday, and its subsequent night; in the course of which appointed time, she would beyond a doubt find some means of escaping to him, and that for the sake of their mutual security in case of her being suspected to have flown to him, and being pursued to his lodgings by her father, he must prepare himself to leave his present abode immediately on her reaching it.

The letter being directed and sealed, she waited with anxiety the first postman who should pass the house ere her father arose, whilst she prayed for the success of her letter as it lay on the table before her. At length she heard the wished-for bell, and having thrown up the sash, and called the man, who immediately heard her and stopped, she let fall her penny and valuable paper, which was in an instant bagged without discovery.

Two days had passed, and no answer, to the almost uncontainable joy of Miss Oxmondeley, arrived from John Morden: she then communicated to Rachel what she had done.

Rachel, with all the arguments real friendship could call to aid her tongue, besought her to recant ere it was too late: but Miss Oxmondeley's mind was in a state hurried beyond the reach of counsel; she only answered again and again, "that her honour was pledged to a man who knew how to value the confidence she had placed in him, and that worlds should not tempt her to deceive him."

After this declaration Rachel began to think seriously of her own situation; she should beyond a doubt be blamed by Sir Gilbert, as an accomplice in his daughter's flight, perhaps too be condemned by Mr. Morden for not having, by communicating to him the plan in embryo, prevented this step in his son.

It was now Thursday evening: thus if she wrote by the first post to Mr. Morden, he could not receive her letter till his son and Miss Oxmondeley must be beyond his reach.

After

After much debate with her own mind she concluded that if she laid open to Sir Gilbert the rash intention of her friend, she might be preventing her that happiness, which it would never be in her power to restore to her.—Miserable she must be if she betrayed her, as her father would instantly compel her to marry Sir Bauble.—Both the prospects of future life now before Miss Oxmondeley, she thought equally gloomy: thus she determined that her tongue should not seem to doom her to misery, when she vainly thought herself on the point of happiness. As to herself, she resolved, if Miss Oxmondeley did succeed in leaving her father's house, to have her own clothes ready packed up to depart from it the same hour; immediately to take the coach from London, which daily passed through Hilden, where her kind friends would readily give her credit for the true detail of events she should deliver to them, and to leave on the table in her chamber an exculpation of herself in writing to Sir Gilbert.

CHAP. V.

Frights and Fears.

FRIDAY, the day of Lady Paragon's ball, being arrived, a message from Sir Bauble to Miss Oxmondeley to air with him that morning, delivered to her at breakfast, opened the business of the day; though she had predetermined to consecrate that day till the hour of going to Lady Paragon's ball to the last farewells of friendship with Rachel, yet as her behaviour towards Sir Bauble in the last week had been an increasing complacency of conduct, in order the more unsuspectedly to forward her secret plans, she durst not hazard a refusal.

At

At the hour appointed he called on her; after his accustomed drive through Bond-street, Piccadilly, Saint James' and Pall-mall, "he must take her," he said, "to a shop in Oxford-street, where he would entreat her choice of a sword for him to be presented in at Saint James' the following week on his return from abroad."

They entered the shop, the articles Sir Bauble required were brought for his inspection, and whilst he was exhibiting his skill in the use of the long sword, and giving quart and tierce, probably to some visionary spectre his brain had conjured up to oppose him; for the spectators saw him only thrust at air, and was warmly applauding himself in every language, as "bravissimo, Signor,"—"Bien fait, Chevalier"—"D—d well upon my soul," and the like; a gig stopped opposite to the window of the shop, and from it alighted and entered John Morden.

Miss Oxmondeley's colour flew from her face, and she seated herself on the point of fainting on a stool by the counter.—The colour which had left her cheeks had settled itself on the face of John Morden; he started on seeing her, but quickly recovering himself, he advanced to the counter and asked to look at a pair of pocket pistols.

"He's going to fight a duel — He'll be killed—I shall never see him again"—were the instant thoughts of Miss Oxmondeley, and she fainted in the arms of a shopman, who caught her as she was falling to the floor.

On reviving she found herself in a parlour behind the shop, and some females, who belonged to the house, assisting Sir Bauble to recover her; her thoughts immediately flew to the shop, she asked for air and was conducted to a chair placed for her by the side of the counter, against which she leaned.

John Morden had disappeared.

"Did you take down that Gentleman's name, George, that had the pistols?" said the master of the shop to a young man who had been serving John Morden.

"They are paid for, Sir," returned the young man: "we got the gentleman his note changed next door; he said he could not leave it, as he might be out of town very early in the morning."

"Did he mean with me?" thought Eliza, "or did he anticipate any other cause?" but this was no place for reflection; she rose and walked to the shop-door.

Her fainting fit was easily apologized and accounted for, to one who did not feel much anxiety to learn its real cause, and who could have no suspicion of any outward impulse having produced the effect; thus, by the time Sir Bauble had selected a sword to his own taste, unfortunately forgetting he had brought Miss Oxmondeley with him to consult hers, she was sufficiently recovered to enter the carriage and return home.

She immediately repaired to her own chamber, her thoughts upon the rack to draw some positive conclusion from John Morden's purchase of the pistols. At length an idea found its way into her brain, which the harnessed state of her mind rendered her ready to adopt, and which once adopted every successive thought strengthened into probability. "John Morden intended, or perhaps already had challenged Sir Bauble to meet him on the following morning, and decide their right to her person by pistols. How many instances had the volumes which had been her continual study, afforded of the like adventurers!"—John Morden's love might have been as violent as her own, and smothered like her own till now; and now she had once declared her passion to him, his glorious spirit soared above the possibility of a rival's ever possessing her, to exist. Sir Bauble had not sufficient principle, nor John Morden sufficient consideration, to fear meeting death from a hand unlicensed to give it; the most dreadful consequences might ensue from the meeting of two men so rashly disposed;—she already saw John Morden wounded, bleeding, dying, and herself forced into the arms of his triumphant murderer!—she shrieked at the phantom

phantom her brain had raised;—for heroines out of romance do not always foresee their heroes fortunate, they are apt to recollect the equal chance of flesh and blood opposed to equal weapons, and that powder and ball are much more formidable enemies than the rattling of chains and sighs of spectres.

Wretched under the impression of her fancy, she immediately sought Sir Gilbert, whom she found seating himself at table, according to his usual custom, to welcome on the dinner; and having cautiously closed the door after her, the faltering of her tongue plainly showing the agitation of her spirits was not affected, she said, "My dear Sir, if you ever valued me, if you ever esteemed me, fly to Sir Bauble and save his life, or stop his hand from murder."

"Murder!" exclaimed the Baronet. "What in the name of creation do you mean?"

"Sir Bauble, Sir, I am convinced is about to accept or send a challenge; he cannot deceive me, I am too sure of it; do, Sir, fly to him, and tell him I never can, I never will become the wife of a man who can be guilty of so unprincipled an action."

"But what's your reason for supposing he is going to fight a duel?—have you any or none?—or is this only some fool's trick of yours to accomplish some end of your own by?"

"Oh! no Sir! indeed it is not; an explanation, Sir, might lose you a son-in-law for ever; only go, Sir, I conjure you, and tell him that on his solemn promise alone of not drawing a sword or trigger against a fellow creature, I will accept of him as my husband."

"I am all over, I don't know how," returned Sir Gilbert. "I hardly know whether I stand on my head or my heels." He went to the sideboard, poured out a glass of wine and drank it; take a little something yourself, do Bet, take a drop of wine—a servant entered the room; "call me a chair as quick as you can." The servant ran to perform the Baronet's orders: he continued, "well,

But, don't be frightened, pray don't, I'll bring him round I promise you, or I won't leave him;—my head twirls again; however I must say I am glad to see you have so much affection for him." He then left the room, entered the chair, and moved towards the neighbouring square where Lady Paragon resided.

No sooner was Sir Gilbert gone than Miss Oxmondeley ran to Rachel, who had not yet been summoned from her chamber to dinner, and imparted to her the entire transactions of the morning of which she was yet ignorant; when she had concluded her relation, Rachel, who could scarcely suppress a smile at the fervency of her friend's imagination, inquired, allowing her suspicion of John Morden's intending to challenge Sir Bauble, to be true, which she considered as a thing utterly improbable, what satisfaction she could promise herself from her father's present embassy?"

"Every satisfaction," she answered, "for Sir Bauble not having yet received John Morden's challenge, not probably knowing there was such a person in existence, from the little notice they had taken of each other that morning in the shop, would readily give the solemn promise she had requested of him through her father, and thus be rendered unable to accept the challenge should John send him one."

Rachel thought this but a slight alleviation of anxiety, if Miss Oxmondeley had really entertained any before on so chimerical a cause of fear; but seeing no reason for apprehension herself, and knowing the difficulty of working by the arguments of reason upon a mind labouring under the romantic impressions which then swayed Miss Oxmondeley; she only pretended to participate in her present satisfaction, and then inquired of her, if she had prepared herself with an explanation of her suspicions relative to Sir Bauble, which he would of course confute, and her father as naturally ask her to relate to him on his return.

This was a point on which Miss Eliza had not yet thought,

thought and she was just beginning to summon fancy to her aid, when Sir Gilbert's voice at the foot of the stairs called to her to descend to him.

She immediately ran down, and no sooner came within his sight than he held out to her the sword that Sir Bauble had that morning bought, exclaiming, "Here, here is the cause of all your fright, Sir Bauble says; take it into your own possession, and then he, and you, and it, will be all safe."

Here was a fortunate aid to the invention of Miss Oxmondeley; "It was indeed Sir," she returned, "but there are more such deadly weapons to be procured, and"—

"Phoo, phoo, I tell you he does not want them," interrupted Sir Gilbert.

"But did he promise?"

"Yes, that he did sacredly and solemnly, and by every thing you can wish; he could not help laughing, though, he said, no more could I indeed for the matter of that, at the drollery of your thinking he was going to fight a duel. He declared himself very much flattered by your anxiety about him, though, Bet, I assure you, and desired I would tell you so too; and let me give you to understand into the bargain, that this concern of yours about Sir Bauble does not raise you a little in my esteem."

"Oh Sir, the man who is to be my husband"—

"Ay, ay, you are coming to your senses at last I find," interrupted the Baronet, "so give me a kiss,—and now let's go to dinner."

CHAP. VI.

New Alarms.

TH E hours between rising from dinner and the time of dressing for Lady Paragon's ball, were passed by Miss Oxmondeley and Rachel in the dressing-room of the former, who voluntarily promised very soon to write to her friend at Hilden, and inform her of the completion of her happiness; on her slender chance of obtaining which rare and enviable good, Rachel ventured to admonish her, but in vain.

When Miss Oxmondeley's hair was dressed, she unlocked the drawer in which she kept her jewels and found it empty; supposing she had mislaid them, she opened the next drawer, and thus every one in succession, but they were not in either of them; she applied to her woman; all the account Chapman could give her was, that she perfectly recollected her mistress had locked them in the usual place after having taken them off the last evening she had worn them;—every place about the room was searched by the maid, and researched by Miss Oxmondeley, but the diamonds were not to be found.

This was the severest stroke of fortune that could have befallen Miss Oxmondeley; but yet not without the expectation of recovering her loss, she ran down into her father's study, and a push on the shoulder and a pull by the knee having awakened him from his nap, she scarcely waited the opening of his eyes to exclaim, "Sir, I have lost my diamonds!"—What is to be done?—I have lost my diamonds!"

"Who's got them?" yawned out Sir Gilbert, half awake, and rubbing his eyes.

"Got them, papa? why they are stolen, I am robbed of them."

"Stolen, Miss Oxmondeley!—What your diamonds, Miss Oxmondeley?" cried Blackman, who was smoking his pipe in the usual corner opposite to Sir Gilbert, and whom Miss Oxmondeley had not yet observed,

observed, owing to the darkness of the room, for it was never permitted to have more light than what was thrown out by the fire, whilst the Baronet slept.

"Yes Sir, stolen. What's to be done, papa?"

"Ay, indeed;—What's to be done, Blackman?" asked the Baronet.

"Was the drawer open when they were taken out, or has the lock been picked, Miss Oxmondeley?" asked Blackman.

"I am sure I locked it when I put them away; and I found it locked now, when I went to look for them," said Eliza.

"Are there any signs of force about the lock, Miss Oxmondeley?"

"I did not observe any," answered she.

"Let's all go and look," cried the baronet; and they immediately proceeded to Miss Oxmondeley's chamber.

"No, there is no appearance of force," said Blackman, examining the drawer. "Are you sure you have not left your keys about? pardon me, Miss Oxmondeley."

"I know I have sometimes, by mistake, left them on my dressing table," replied Eliza; "but I don't recollect to have done so since the last time of my locking the diamonds away."

"Ay, but you may have, for all that," cried the Baronet; "and from that carelessness comes all the mischief, I dare say."

"Somebody in the house must have got them, papa," returned Eliza, the tears starting into her eyes; "and it is very hard that one cannot hire a servant now-a-days, that does not prove a thief."

Sir Gilbert, not knowing the real cause of his daughter's anxiety, attributed it of course to a false one, and answered, "Well, well, only content yourself without them to-night, and if they can't be found——"

"Oh, begging pardon, Sir Gilbert, for my interruption," exclaimed Blackman, "as they must be in the house——"

"Ay."

"Ay, do papa, let us have a search-warrant got directly, and let all the servants' trunks be examined," interrupted Miss Oxmondeley.

"I'll be back in a quarter of an hour with one," said Blackman, moving towards the door.

"Stop, Blackman, stop," cried the baronet, "it's ten o'clock now, and if all the servants have to undergo an examination to-night, we shan't get to Lady Paragon's at all. Do you stay in the house to-night, and see that nothing's carried out of it, and in the morning we'll have the search-warrant got."

"Pray, Sir, let it be done to-night," exclaimed Eliza, with a vehemence that made Sir Gilbert start.

"I own you have reason to be mortified Bet, I own you have," returned he; but, out of respect to Lady Paragon, we can't spare the time; but never mind to-night; carry it off without minding; and, either with or without them you have lost, you shall cut a dash in twice as many more on the night of our ball here at home; so be content for once, there's a fine girl; come, Blackman, come;—Bet, get on your things as fast as you can; put on a feather or two the more, or something, and think no more about them to-night."

Sir Gilbert and Blackman then left the room, and Miss Oxmondeley threw herself upon the bed, and burst into a flood of tears.

In a few moments Rachel entered to her ready dress: "Oh, my dear friend, I have lost John Morden for ever!" cried Eliza, on seeing her.

Rachel had as yet heard nothing of the late alarm; Miss Oxmondeley explained it to her as well as her agitated spirits would permit her, and then added, "Shall I make one bold attempt?—shall I fly to him destitute as I am? shall I throw myself upon his pity, with nothing more to offer him than a heart of love, and the few guineas my purse contains?"

"You have already heard my sentiments on this subject," replied Rachel; "they cannot be altered

in its favour by the so very material diminution of the slender means of comfort that before attended it."

"Was there ever so great a wretch as myself?" sighed out Miss Oxmondeley; and leaning her arm and head against one of the posts of the bed, remained some time silent and motionless, Rachel in vain endeavouring to console her, and persuade her to finish her dress.

Presently she moved hastily to the bell and rang it: her woman entered: "Chapman," she said, "I never before believed you dishonest; but if you have taken away my diamonds, restore them to me, and I give you my honour your fault shall never be known to any one."

"Oh Lord have mercy!" Chapman began, "she was sure, she knew no more of them than the child unborn; Heaven was her witness she had never stolen the least thing in the course of her whole life; she knew the crime and sin too well, and abhorred it too much; as she was a christian soul, she was always scrupulous of picking up the pins her mistress let fall upon the floor, because her conscience told her they belonged to the girl that swept the room."

"Pray finish your dress without them," interrupted Rachel; "Sir Gilbert will be impatient, for it is growing very late."

Miss Oxmondeley again turned to her woman, without regarding Rachel:—"Only consider, Chapman, the disgrace of being detected in theft, the misery of a prison, and perhaps the horror of dying on a scaffold—all this must befall you, if you have got my diamonds; and if you will restore them to me, only tell me where I can find them. I will take the whole upon myself; I'll say I mislaid them; any thing to keep suspicion from you."

"Heaven knew how innocent she was," Chapman answered; "and heaven, she hoped, would give her strength to prove her innocence:"—an attempt at crying followed these words,

"You

"You are well aware," continued Miss Oxmondeley, with all the vehemence of persuasion, "that you cannot escape detection by any other means than those I offer you, if you are the aggressor; and who else can have known so readily where to find things which none but yourself have ever seen where I kept?"

Chapman had by this time called to her aid a string of sob, which she followed by wishing, "that it had pleased the Lord to set a mark upon all thieves, for the sake of honest people."

"Only restore them to me, and I'll even give you ten guineas as a recompence," said Eliza.

Sir Gilbert, impatient for his daughter to descend, it being past the hour at which he had appointed to go to Lady Paragon's, came up to hasten her, and opened her chamber door, as she uttered the last sentence. "Ten guineas, indeed!" he exclaimed; "I don't wonder you are anxious about not having your jewels to wear to-night, I can't say I am; but if she there is the jade that has got them, she shall have something more lasting for her remembrance than ten guineas, or a hundred guineas, I promise her—bread and water, and a neck-swing, with the knot under her left ear!"

Chapman fell on her knees, and begged Sir Gilbert to hear her defend the innocence of her honourable heart.

"Thieving always ended with lying," Sir Gilbert answered; "and he would not hear a word she had to say."

Chapman rose:—"She had never met with such usage in her life; she had expected to be better treated in a nobleman's house than to be called thief and liar unheard; and she would not stay under his roof another minute."

Sir Gilbert had already taken very good care that there should be no passage in or out of his house that evening to any one but himself, his daughter, Rachel and the servants who were to attend them to Lady Paragon's; that restraint, however, was not necessary

to keep Mrs. Chapman from leaving the house in the violent hurry she had pretended to feel for quitting it; she had an excellent service under Miss Oxmondeley, and knew its value too well to be hasty in throwing it up.

In obedience with her father's positive commands, Miss Oxmondeley then finished her dress with all expedition, and they set out for Lady Paragon's with various feelings, whose different natures must be easily understood; Blackman being left by Sir Gilbert the faithful guardian of his mansion till his return.]

CHAP. VII.

Live and Learn.

"**H**OW many an envied beauty has an aching heart!" thought Rachel, as Miss Oxmondeley, who opened the ball with Sir Bauble, moved through the divided ranks of the two sexes, followed by the sneers of her own, and the admiration of the other.

Rachel's first partner was a blood of fashion, who had at most completed his nineteenth year; one of those mature boys who allow no praise to virtue, or wisdom to experience; who having boxed with success at school, and drank without flinching at college, start undaunted into the world;—his fists are the only apology he offers for the freedom of his tongue, and conviction of his errors comes upon him only with the loss of ability to pursue his obnoxious life.

The name of this newly-introduced gentleman was Sir Flat Fire; he was presented to Rachel by Sir Bauble before the dancing began.

"Do you dance, Ma'am?"

Rachel courtesied in answer.

"Very

"Very happy," replied Sir Flat.

A pause ensued.

"Did you see me at the play last night?—was you there?"

"No, Sir."

"Oh Gad, you should have been there; the Jordan was devilish fine, upon my soul!"

"What was the piece, Sir?"

"Curse me if I know; I never look at the play:—I like the opera well enough."

"You are well acquainted with the language, probably, Sir?"

"Who, me?—Oh no, you don't catch me at cracking my brain with their lingo.—One tongue's enough for a man who knows how to use it."

"I believe the dance is going to begin, Sir, shall we join it?"

He took her hand and led her forward.—"Oh! what a damned tune!—Why don't they play something else?"

"The Scotch dances are generally the most pleasing," said Rachel.—"Do not you think so, Sir?"

"Oh:G—d! they are all alike to me; I don't know one squeak from another."

Presently Lady Varny came near Sir Flat.

"Holloa, Varny," he cried, who's this girl I am dancing with?"

Lady Varny whispered him in return.

"I thought she was fresh at it," he answered.

When they arrived at the top of the dance, he approached close to Rachel—"Lend me your fan, will you?" he said; and accompanied his request by taking it out of her hand.

"Well," he continued, "and when is Miss Ox—What the devil is her name more than Ox, to be married to Bauble?"

"I really don't know, Sir."

"He thinks himself devilishly knowing, don't he? with his French and travels, and Italian pictures and curiosities. Did you ever see him take a bottle

bottle at a sitting? he's afraid of putting his hair out of puff if he gets smoky; tell him so, and ask him to crop like me, will you?"

"I am not on sufficient terms of intimacy, Sir, with Bauble, to offer him my advice. Shall we begin the dance?"

When they had arrived about the middle of the set, Sir Flat fanning himself all the way with Rachel's fan, cried, "What a damned bore dancing is! let's sit down:" and immediately seated himself on a bench to which Rachel, from timidity more than inclination, followed him.

"I don't dance the next, upon honor," he said, after a few minutes pause, "it is so infernally hot.—Have you any lavender water?"

Rachel gave him her smelling bottle.

He unscrewed the top, and returned it into her hand; and having some moments kept the bottle to his nose, he rose hastily, and saying, "You'll lend me them, won't you?" walked across the room, and placed himself by a counterpart of his own person, with whom he immediately began to converse.

At the commencement of the second dance, when Sir Bauble and Miss Oxmondeley reached the spot where Rachel was sitting, Sir Bauble advanced to her and asked, "Where her partner was?"

"I don't know, Sir Bauble," she answered.

"How! Why, mon Dieu! had you any dispute?"

"Oh no, Sir Bauble, I believe he did not wish to dance any more, and left me to——"

"Il monstro! Il monstro!" interrupted Sir Bauble; "I'll bring him back to duty in an instant;" and was departing in search of him.

Rachel rose and followed him.—"Sir Bauble, I desire you will not—I had rather you would not—I——"

"Your commands are inviolable," he replied;—"Will you honor me with your hand for the two next dances?"

Rachel courtesied assent, and Sir Bauble returned her a look of pleasure which she would rather have been

been spared :—she then returned to her seat, and he to the dance he had left to address her.

When the two first dances were ended, Sir Bauble came to claim Rachel's promise ; she rose, and he handed her to the set.

In how strange a situation did she then feel herself ; honored by Sir Bauble's notice, in the opinion of the company, and degraded in her own by receiving attentions which it was impossible for her to refuse accepting in the place and circumstances she was then in.

After many apparent hesitations and attempts to begin a discourse, Sir Bauble said in a whisper to Rachel, whilst he took her hand in his, as if preparatory to the beginning of the dance, " I am indebted to you beyond what I can express, for not divulging to Miss Oxmondeley, that you saw me at the Viscountess of Domino's masquerade ; and more flattered by your secrecy than I fear I shall ever be able to repay."

" Tenderness for the feelings of a valued friend, Sir Bauble, instigated me to act as I have done."

" Conscious superiority of charms prove its own pre-eminence by tenderness to a rival !"

" Rival !" echoed Rachel's heart ;—indignation, hatred, contempt, and pride, rose mingled into her cheeks in a blush of fire ; she would have given worlds, had she possessed them, for the eloquence of an orator, to have shrunk the wretch before her into his own insignificance !—her thoughts refused to assist her in bringing any satisfactory reproof to the aid of her tongue, and she was obliged to make silence her mark of contempt.

The blush which had suffused her cheeks Sir Bauble had construed into an opinion favourable to his desires ; and pressing her hand as they began the dance, he said—" The sympathy of a sensible heart like yours must be a more than mortal bliss."

At the end of the dance, Miss Oxmondeley, to Rachel's great relief, joined them ; and Sir Bauble being called aside by one of the company, she had
just

just time to whisper, "My dear Rachel, I am now tolerably happy in mind; I have resolved to-morrow morning to try how far I can prevail on my father's liberality, for obtaining some money, which he will of course imagine I want to expend on articles of dress, and with that I will fly to John Morden, be the event what it may."

"Then I shall certainly leave London to-morrow," said Rachel.

"Let us then agree to depart from my father's house at the same time, and our separate intentions will be the less suspected."

"How are you to contrive to leave the house?" asked Rachel, "after your father's positive injunction for you never to stir from it unaccompanied by him or——"

"Oh, my dear," interrupted Eliza, "I don't at all fear getting out, and you know I have no return to apprehend."

With an apology to Miss Oxmondeley for interrupting their conversation, Sir Bauble returned, and demanded Rachel's hand with inward triumph and pleasure marked on his countenance, which she could not misinterpret, and of which she was the only one in the room who did not misconceive the cause, and consider Miss Oxmondeley as one of the most enviable women alive.

The second dance passed as the first had done, Sir Bauble at every opportunity paying Rachel open flattery, and in obscure terms avowing his passion for her.—"Let it pass," wisely determined Rachel: "I shall to-morrow be beyond his reach; and, in less than a week after I am seen no more by him, beyond the limits of this libertine's memory:" and it was a just idea; for the passion of a libertine runs in an uncertain course, whose progress being impeded in one channel, flows with equal ardour into the first other that presents itself.

At the supper-table the dancers were joined by Lady Paragon, Sir Gilbert, and a party of elders from the card-room.

Part of the conversation between Sir Gilbert and Lady Paragon, next to whom he was placed at supper, Rachel overheard, and from it she gathered that the baronet had been very much the opposite to a winner.

When they rose from supper, Lady Paragon asked Sir Gilbert, "if he had any objection to his revenge?"

"None at all, my Lady, none at all," answered the baronet, and they moved to the card-room, whither Rachel, whose two partners had given her sufficient disgust to the donce, for her not to wish to repeat it, followed.

A party at vingt-un, of which were Sir Gilbert and Lady Paragon, were just seating themselves, when Sir Flat Fire entered the room. "Who's the loser," he cried, walking up to the table.

"I am sorry to say Sir Gilbert has lost," answered Lady Paragon.

"Yes," said Sir Gilbert, "this here, what do you call it?"

"Vingt-un," interrupted Lady Paragon.

"Ay, vingt-un," continued he, "is a new game to me, and I have paid for my teaching."

"How many shiners are you minus, Sir Gibby?" cried Sir Flat.

"How many have I lost, do you mean?" asked Sir Gilbert.

"Ay, how many?" repeated Sir Flat.

Sir Gilbert put his hand into his waistcoat-pocket, and pulling out his purse, in which were bank notes and cash to a considerable amount, gave some minutes to its tale, during which, "Smoke the quiz" was handed round amongst the bystanders, and conveyed to the card-table by winks and kicks; and then answered, "four and thirty guineas."

"Then I'll tell you what," called out Sir Flat, laying a pack of cards upon the table from his hand as he spoke, "I'll give you a chance as you are a losing man; I'll hold you four and thirty guineas, that

that when you cut that pack of cards, I'll tell you the top one of those that remain on the table."

"Without touching them?" asked Sir Gilbert.

"Won't come within arm's-length," returned Sir Flat.

"I have fifty-one chances in my favour," said Sir Gilbert, looking round upon the company.—

"Done."

"Done," echoed Sir Flat.

"And done again," repeated Sir Gilbert.

"Cut," cried Sir Flat, rubbing his hands in exultation.

"I will," returned Sir Gilbert, and followed the word with the action; the division of the pack gave to view the king of spades.

"King of spades," exclaimed Sir Flat; "you owe me thirty-four guineas."

"It is not fair," cried Sir Gilbert; "it is not fair: the cards were laid the wrong side upwards, and the top one turned down;—it is not fair, and I won't pay."

"What's that you say, Sir?" called out Sir Flat.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, gentlemen!" exclaimed Lady Paragon, rising and interposing, "settle this dispute amicably, I beseech you, for my sake, I beseech you!" She lifted the salts to her nose. "Sir Flat, you are naturally warm, and misunderstood my friend Sir Gilbert; he did not mean to dispute your having won the bet, or his paying of it: he only meant to convey, that you had deceived him; that is, that you had been too much for him."

"Let's see the cash, then," cried Sir Flat.

"There!" said Sir Gilbert, throwing it on the table, "there! and I have a good mind to say I'll never cut a pack of cards again as long as I live."

"Oh yes," called out Sir Flat, "take my advice, and bite the bubble till you are up to every go; it will be your turn to queer 'em then; that's the way I got all my knowledge and experience." So saying he coolly took up the money and walked away.

"There

"There are more games than one to be learnt, I find," said Sir Gilbert. "After all, nothing is like the odd trick and four by honours!"

"We will make a rubber directly," said Lady Paragon; "Why did you not mention your partiality to whist before?—I am afraid you merely played at vingt-un out of complaisance;—I am quite shocked I did not ask you to name your game."

A party for a rubber was accordingly formed: Sir Gilbert won a trifling stake; and at the conclusion of his game, his carriage having been some time announced, returned home with his daughter and Rachel.

CHAP. VIII.

A Surprise.

ARRIVED at home, Rachel went with Miss Oxmondeley into her dressing-room to converse a few minutes before they retired to their respective chambers, when Brookes, Rachel's woman, entering, requested to know if her mistress had any objection to her assisting Miss Oxmondeley to undress.

"Where's Chapman?" asked Eliza.

"Oh *me'm*," returned Brookes, "she says she can't bear to see your face whilst you *suspicate* her to be a thief."

"Nonsense!" replied Miss Oxmondeley; "tell her to come to me directly; and let her know, that I think her refusing to see me, no proof of her innocence."

"Oh! indeed *me'm*, I have not the heart to go," returned Brookes; "she has taken on so, and cried so, all the time you have been out, and she is gone to bed praying for to-morrow to come and *dewluge* the thief and clear her."

"Never

"Never mind, Eliza, if she is in bed," said Rachel; "I'll sit by the fire till Brookes has undressed you; I am in no hurry to go to bed."

"Heaven grant she may be asleep and her thoughts easy!" exclaimed Brookes with a sigh.

"If she is really as innocent as she pretends," returned Rachel, "why should they be otherwise? if not, she merits the reproofs of her conscience."

"It is hard judging, *me'm*," replied Brookes.

"You mistook me, if you thought I meant either to exculpate or arraign her," said Rachel.

"Oh dear *me'm*, I did not think that, *me'm*; I meant myself, *me'm*."

"Why, do you suspect Chapman is guilty then?" said Miss Oxmondeley.

"Oh dear *me'm*, Heaven forbid I should say such a hard word of any body; people should be cautious how they *suspicate* folks to others, whatever they may think of them to themselves."

"I am sure you know something wrong of her," cried Eliza; "pray let me know what it is."

"Oh dear, no, *me'm*, nothing wrong, *me'm*, only I thought poor Mrs. Chapman rather odd lately, *me'm*."

"Within these few days, do you mean that you thought her changed?" asked Miss Oxmondeley.

"Within about a week, I believe, *me'm*; but pray don't ask me to speak to the blame of a fellow-servant, *me'm*; I would not speak another *sybul* for all I am worth against a young woman that may be as innocent as myself, Heaven help her."

"You have gone too far to retract," said Miss Oxmondeley; "I must hear all you know of her, now you have so plainly said that you do know something about her."

"Oh dear *me'm*," replied Brookes, looking at Rachel for her interposition.

"I think Miss Oxmondeley perfectly right in insisting upon being made acquainted with the truth," said Rachel; "and I must join her in the demand you have authorised to be made upon you."

"Oh,

"Oh dear!" Brookes answered, "she wished she had cut her tongue out before she had let it run so fast; but the whole truth was, that Mrs. Chapman had had a man come to speak to her twice lately in an evening, that had never come in farther than the hall; and Mr. Samuel that had let him in both times, had said, he was muffled up in a Bath coating *rapper* and stouched hat; and that by his manner, and her manner, when they were together, for Mr. Samuel watched them a little bit one night, they seemed to be after something *clandestine*."

"Is that all you know?" inquired Miss Oxmondeley, when Brookes stopped speaking.

"Every single word," Brookes answered; "and she hoped the ladies would not mention it, because Mr. Samuel had told her of it, and she could not bear the thoughts of being called a blab."

Rachel replied, "That the circumstances of the following morning would direct them, whether it was material to inform Sir Gilbert of it, or not, for that the point in question was a case that would admit of no favour being shown to any body."

Miss Oxmondeley being undrest, Rachel proceeded to her chamber, telling Brookes she might leave her, as she had a letter to write before she went to bed.

By the time Rachel had changed her dress, written the predetermined exculpation of her conduct, which she meant to leave for Sir Gilbert, and finished her packing preparatory to her departure, some of the servants were risen; thus, having contented herself with a short sleep on the outside of the bed, she left her chamber, and went into the breakfast-room; on entering which, Sir Gilbert, who was already there, hailed her by exclaiming, "Good-morrow, Miss, I am glad to see you up; come, make me some tea, will you, as fast as you can? for I want to go a thief-hunting, when I have got my breakfast."

Rachel placed herself at the table, and began to make the tea; Miss Oxmondeley joined them in a few

few minutes, and shortly after arrived Blackman with the search-warrant.

No sooner was breakfast ended, than all the servants were summoned to bring in their respective keys; and they all appeared immediately with them, except Chapman, who sent in hers by Brookes, on the same plea on which she had excused herself from undressing Miss Oxmondeley the preceding night.

Sir Gilbert and Blackman then proceeded on their search.—After nearly two hours' absence from the breakfast-parlour, they returned to it with information that their labours had been all in vain, and requesting Rachel to suffer her chamber to be examined for the satisfaction of the servants who still lay under an unfixed suspicion, and who had given a hint, Blackman said, that every one's property, whether lady or servant, ought to undergo the same investigation.

In conscious innocence Rachel immediately held out her keys to Blackman; but as he was on the point of taking them, recollecting that her clothes were all packed up, and that from their being found in this situation, suspicion of some secret plan being in agitation, if not a discovery of the real cause, must ensue, she drew them gently back, saying,—“That she begged Sir Gilbert's and Mr. Blackman's pardon, but there was a particular reason she could not well explain to them, why she wished to be permitted to be in her chamber a few minutes before they entered it.”

Blackman answered, “that it were a jest to think her otherwise than innocent, but that he feared it would have an odd appearance to the family.”

“Well, then,” said Rachel, “will the servants have any objection to Miss Oxmondeley's being in the room a few minutes before you and Sir Gilbert enter it?”

“If they have,” cried the Baronet. “they are fools; for they must be sure Bet would never be such a ninny, as to favour a thief that had robbed herself.

—“I'll go and ask them;” and he left the room.

During

During these speeches Rachel perceived that Miss Oxmondeley plainly understood she wished her things to be unpacked, and replaced in the drawers, before they were examined by Sir Gilbert and the lawyer; thus not a word passed any one of the party's lips till the baronet returned, exclaiming, "No, they are wise enough to find out there can be no harm in that; so, Bet, take the keys, and go up stairs, and we will follow you up into the dressing-room, and wait there till you call us in."

Miss Oxmondeley preceded; and Sir Gilbert saying, "Come, Miss, let us all go together,"—he, Blackman, and Rachel, followed her, till arrived at the doors of the dressing-room and Rachel's chamber, which were opposite to each other, they turned to the right, and Eliza to the left.

Miss Oxmondeley closed the door after her, and Sir Gilbert's party remained with that of their apartment opened, waiting Eliza's call: about five minutes passed in discourse, on the topic which alone occupied their thoughts, when a violent shriek meeting their ears, they had hardly time to inquire whence it came, before Miss Oxmondeley rushed out of Rachel's chamber into the dressing-room with the fatal diamonds in her hand, and fell to the floor in a fit.

Sir Gilbert rang the bell violently for assistance; Rachel sunk upon a chair, unable to support her astonished frame; and Blackman raised his eyes in silent wonder, while his eye-balls seemed starting from their sockets.

General confusion occupied the first few moments; but no sooner did Miss Oxmondeley open her eyes, than Sir Gilbert commanded universal stillness, by exclaiming, "Who is the thief?"

"Oh cruel, cruel Rachel!" cried Miss Oxmondeley, when she could articulate; "Why did you make such rash attempt, when you saw my firm resolution?—You have undone yourself."

"You vagabond hussy, with your smooth face and innocent tongue, you are turned out a thief at last,

last, are you?—Fetch me a constable this instant, to take her to a justice,” vociferated Sir Gilbert.

All Rachel’s little remaining strength fled from her on hearing these words, and she sunk from her chair upon the ground.

Blackman flew to execute the baronet’s order:—Miss Oxmondeley saw his intention; and by an effort, to which her strength was scarcely equal, raising herself on her feet, she pursued him, exclaiming, “Stay, Blackman, I conjure you stay, for mercy’s sake hear me speak first.” Sir Gilbert followed, and commanded Blackman to obey him, which he did not wait being twice bid perform; then turning to his daughter, he continued: “mercy, indeed! do you think I’ll show any mercy to a thief, a serpent that I have fostered, to turn and sting me?—no, I’ll be d——d if I do.”

“Hear me, my dear father,” cried Miss Oxmondeley, falling on her knees before him; “indeed, indeed, she had no criminal intention in secreting them; I know she is as innocent of guilt as myself; what shall I say, to convince you that she is not a thief, that she does not deserve to suffer? For God’s sake spare her.”

The reader need hardly be told, that after the first moments of ungovernable and unutterable surprise to Miss Oxmondeley on finding her jewels secreted in one of Rachel’s trunks were passed, and reason began again to dawn, she hesitated not to conclude, that her friend had hid them for a while from her, in the hope of preventing her flying to John Morden, against which she had so strongly admonished her. Thus convinced in her own mind that she was innocent of the intention of theft; and hearing her doomed to the prelude of a prison, without any means of rescuing her from it, except by condemning herself to perpetual misery, by an avowal that would for ever harden her father’s heart against her, her desire of convincing him of Rachel’s innocence, without alledging the proof that could alone carry conviction with it, drove her almost to madness.

Sir

Sir Gilbert had replied to his daughter's last sentence, and she was continuing in her turn of speech to urge useless entreaties, when Rachel's recovering voice, asking, "Where is my friend Eliza?—does she condemn me too?" called her back into the dressing-room.

"Oh no! indeed she does not," returned Eliza, throwing her arms round Rachel's neck. "I know you had no guilty intention in taking them; I know you had not."

"Pull her away," cried Sir Gilbert to the servants. "What, you can't be content with being robbed, but you must hug the thief into the bargain?"

"Sir Gilbert," said Rachel, raising herself upon her knees to address him, "I am as innocent of the appearances which condemn me in your opinion as you can be yourself."

"Then how the devil did the diamonds get among your things? answer me that," returned Sir Gilbert.

"Were I to die in answering you, that I know not by what means they came there, I should die in the truth," answered Rachel. "Oh, Sir Gilbert! pity one, who by never having been exposed to misery, knows not how to combat against it. I have no one here but you, to whom I can apply for protection.—Oh! why did I ever quit the guardians of my defenceless state?—Picture to yourself your own child, fatherless, unprotected, labouring under a false appearance of criminality; about to be condemned to the solitary horrors of a prison, without one pitying voice to plead in her behalf; and then, though your own heart condemns me, you will, you must save me from the violence of strangers."

"Save your breath to talk to them that have authority to deal a little more roughly with you than I have," returned Sir Gilbert, gruffly.

Pride and ignorance have ever a third companion—self-conceit—a quality which teaches its possessor to decide on every doubtful point with harshness, and to maintain its opinion with firmness: this quality

lity has no power of reasoning ; thus immediately marks down every appearance a reality ;—a heart, thus stuffed, has no aperture for pity.

Rachel next turned to Miss Oxmondeley : and unable to articulate, bathed her hand with her tears. For the first time, Eliza received the supplication of her friend with coolness : whilst she had thought she understood the motive of her conduct, she pitied her with all the fervour of romance : after her solemn declaration of not knowing by what means the jewels which she had herself found in the middle of one of Rachel's packed trunks came there, she was at a loss what ought to be her present opinion of her friend.

Sir Gilbert presently left the room to inquire if Blackman was returned ; and meeting with Chapman, who was now again visible, and exulting in the recent proof of her innocence, which the communicative Brookes, who was on everybody's side in turn, had conveyed to her, learnt from her, that Miss Rachel's things were all ready packed up ; “ no doubt,” she said, “ to have gone off with her prize, if opportunity had served ;” and this confirmed him beyond all doubt in thinking her guilty.

Rachel continued her supplications and asseverations of innocence to her friend, till Sir Gilbert entered the room ; but she was not a little grieved, and not less astonished, to find them meet with little warmth, and less faith, on the part of Eliza. This was a stroke she could not well bear up against ; she had considered friendship too sacred a tie to be swerved from its duty by appearances, however strong ;—Rachel's conduct was marked by integrity of heart, which admits no variation of a once formed opinion, but the positive proof that it was ill-founded : Eliza's was romance, that meant to do well ; and the very support of such a character requires that prompt belief of whatever seems to be, which the nature of uninvestigated appearances must often lead to do wrong.

CHAP. IX.

To be passed over by those who have not a most profound reverence for the various distributors of justice.

IN a few minutes' time Rachel was hurried into a hackney-coach, and Blackman followed her into it. "Don't be alarmed, Miss, don't be alarmed; I'll take all the care in my power that you are not roughly dealt by," said the lawyer, as they passed along.

"Under the cruel appearances of guilt that now lie upon me," said Rachel, "I have no reason to expect protection from you, Sir, an utter stranger to me."

"That face of yours, Miss, must claim protection and respect every where, Miss," returned Blackman, fixing his eyes stedfastly on hers.

Rachel felt no meaning but one conveyed by his words, and immediately answered to it, "It tells you then that I am innocent?"

"I hope so, sincerely I hope so," said Blackman in a doubtful voice.

"How contradictory are this man's words!" thought Rachel. "What can they mean?" She turned her eyes towards him, and was about to speak, when the coach stopped.

"Oh!" cried Blackman, looking out, "this is the justice's."

The constable who had attended them, knocked at the door of a house of decent appearance, and on its being opened by a boy in livery, Blackman put his head from the window, and asked "if the justice was at home?"

An answer in the affirmative was followed by the opening of the door, and Rachel was led out into the house by Blackman, who directed her to enter a little room on the right, at the door of which the constable stationed himself, whilst the lawyer went into a room on the opposite side.

In

In a few minutes he returned to her, and summoned her to follow him into the other room, in which, at a table, sat the justice and his clerk.

The justice, who was sitting before his breakfast table, was at most five feet high, and at least as many round; he was sitting, or more properly lying aslope, upon an easy chair; his face was fat, unmeaning, and sleek as his velvet cap; and if butter had possessed the same quality as oil, in making man of a cheerful countenance, his countenance must have been unexceptionable for its pleasantry, as he did not wipe off the drops of grease which ran upon his chin from his toast as he bit it, but stroaked them along upon it with the back of his hand, to prevent their current reaching his cravat.

On Rachel's entering the apartment, he raised his head, and directing his eyes towards her, while he supported his elevated body, by placing his right hand on the arm of his chair, and his left on the seat; he said, "What's your name, eh, girl?"

"Rachel Ellis."

"Rachel Ellis, very well. What else?"

"Nothing more."

"Nothing more that you choose to own;—but I believe I have seen you before with another name, if I am not mistaken; and I have a pretty good memory for rogues' faces; I'm thankful to say."

This was esteemed no mean witticism in the opinion of this illustrious magistrate, and he stopped to applaud it with a laugh much resembling a stifled cough.

"Well," he then continued, "so you have been making free with Miss Oxmondeley's diamonds, I hear."

"Indeed, Sir," answered Rachel, "I am innocent of the cruel appearances on which I am suspected."

"I did not expect you would accuse yourself," he cried. "No, no, I always expect petticoats to plead innocence;—always expect it. Well, come, come, let us give you a fair hearing. I never denied a

fair hearing to a woman in my life, I am thankful to say. As you confess appearances are against you, and that they are false, you can easily explain them, I suppose."

Rachel burst into tears—"Indeed, Sir, I cannot," she answered.

"Very well, then I have nothing further to say, than that the sooner you confess, the more time you'll spare me, and the more I shall be obliged to you, as my time never wants employment, I am thankful to say."

"How, Sir, can I confess a crime of which I know myself innocent?" asked Rachel.

"I don't require you should, girl;—it is nothing to me. I can proceed on clear evidence as well as on your own confession, and that I have abundantly, I am thankful to say; so on the evidence of Mr. Noah Blackman, I commit you to prison to take your trial at the next sessions, for stealing Miss Oxmondeley's diamonds; and so, clerk, draw out a mittimus."

"To prison, Sir!" said Rachel. "Am I condemned to prison, when I solemnly aver I am innocent of the charge?"

"Don't be impudent, girl," cried the worshipful justice. "I have proof to convict, and authority to commit, I am thankful to say."

"Can it be impudence, Sir, to declare in my own defence, that I have no knowledge from what cause Miss Oxmondeley's diamonds were found in my trunk?"

"No, no, not impudence, only lying," answered he, "a little mistake of somebody perhaps, that had a mind to make you a present at Miss Oxmondeley's expence. I lock my own drawers, and unlock no one else's, I am thankful to say." This speech was also admired by the distributor of justice, as an admirable hit, and he once more laughed himself applause.

The mittimus being drawn out, Rachel was again led into the hackney coach, and Blackman again entered

entered it after her. "Oh, Heaven protect me!" she cried. "To what misery am I innocently condemned!"

"It was hard indeed," Blackman answered, "that, knowing herself free from guilt, she had no means of proving it."

"If you really believe me innocent," asked Rachel, "why did you give evidence against me?"

"I considered," replied Blackman, "that if I did not, Sir Gilbert of course would: and you know the fewer persons engaged in an affair of this kind, the less noise it makes in the world; which must be in favour of the party suspected; besides, Miss, I am a member of the law, and it commands me not to screen a suspected person. Thus you perceive I cannot act outwardly against my profession: but you have my private good wishes, I assure you."

Rachel sighed.

Blackman continued. "Have you any money, Miss? Pardon me, but you will find an uncomfortable situation where you are going without it."

Rachel felt in her pockets, and found she had not her purse about her. "I have money at Sir Gilbert's," she answered, "but how shall I get it?"

"Oh, never mind: as long as you are worth twenty or thirty guineas," said Blackman, "I'll contrive you sha'n't want the accommodation they can procure you—but perhaps you have not that sum in your possession?"

"Yes," replied Rachel, "I have nearly sixty pounds by me."

"Oh, very well, very well: then I'll take upon me, to ensure you kind and genteel treatment. I'll frank you, and you shall merely sign an avowal that you are my debtor in such and such sums at the bottom of your bills, or on a stamp, or by any means of that kind;—however, I promise you, your not having your cash about you, shall give you no uneasiness."

"Thank you, Sir," Rachel answered; and a short silence which followed brought them to the prison.

They entered the turnkey's parlour, where sat assembled round a circular table, at dinner, Mr. Pelf the jailor, his wife, and daughter, a lad of about thirteen their son, and a man, whom Rachel afterwards found was a gentleman lying like herself under the penalty of the law; in plain terms, a highwayman, who had amassed a sufficient sum to enable him to sit at Mr. Pelf's table, the few remaining weeks he had to live.

After some moments of private conversation between Pelf and Blackman, during which Rachel underwent the silent scrutiny of the eyes of the rest of the party, Blackman said sufficiently loud for Rachel to hear, yet pretending to whisper it to the jailor—"So, do you understand, Mr. Pelf? I beg the lady may be tenderly and genteelly treated. I am answerable for any expence she may incur."

Mr. Pelf, whose character and person may be summed up in one short sentence, namely, that he wore plainly written in his countenance, "I am Sir Oracle"—"of my prison house," might be added—answered, in a voice whose roughness seemed rather assumed than natural, "You know me, Mr. Blackman: I say it shall be done, and that's enough: you know me."

Blackman then turned to Rachel, bid her farewell, told her to keep up her spirits, for he was her friend, that this gentleman and his wife, pointing to Mr. and Mrs. Pelf, would be very kind to her, to which they both answered, "Oh yes," and promised to call and see how she found herself in the evening.

Blackman then left the room: and Rachel, alone amidst strangers—for even Blackman's presence, whose person was familiar to her, had afforded her a slender consolation—in a prison, with a heart overburdened by reflection on its injuries, again burst into tears.

"Come, come, Miss," cried Pelf, "we must put you into better spirits. Here, Moll," he continued to a girl who was acting a burlesque upon waiting, "lay the young lady a plate, and a knife, and set a chair."

"Here,

"Here, Polly," exclaimed Mrs. Pelf, a deformed little woman in an elbow chair, against the back of which leaned a pair of crutches, that shewed her also to be lame; with a contour of features that indicated much self approbation, and a crystalline drop of brown liquid hanging at the point of her oversized nose, like a sign of invitation to her snuff-box, which she kept almost incessantly in use, and which now stood at her right hand upon the dinner table; "Here, set Miss her chair by me, where she can feel the fire;—hitch a-bit farther down, Carline, my love," she continued to her daughter, "and make the young lady room betwixt us."

Rachel had at this time no tongue for thanks or apologies, and mechanically seated herself on the chair to which Pelf led her, and afterwards returned to his own.

"I hope you excuses my not getting up Miss," Mrs. Pelf proceeded to say, when Rachel was seated: "but I am quite a cripple with the rheumatis in my hips—I ha' been so now a-gwain of five years."

"Much that signifies to her," called out Pelf—"Come, don't jabber about yourself, but help the young lady to a bit of victuals; I'll be bound to say she is hungry enough with tramping about to the justice's, and then here, and where not besides, this frosty morning."

"Vell, vell, Numps, and ain't I a-gwain to help Miss? only I thought she might like to compose herself a minute or so first. Now, Miss, what vill you have, fish, or flesh, or pudden?"

The fish was the remnant of a tail of salt fish.—The flesh was a fat lump of mutton, on the top of which lay the tail of the animal, gracefully curled, and which, with the pudding, formed one dish, vulgarly called a toad in a hole.

"Vell, Miss, which are you for?" repeated Mrs. Pelf.

"I can't eat any thing, thank you, Ma'am," returned Rachel.

"Dearest me!" replied Mrs. Pelf, "I hope you
D 4 are

are vell : vill you have a drop of cordial waters, or any thing ?”

“ A little plain water, if you please.”

“ Vhy, it won't do you a penny of good, Mifs.— Lord help you !”

“ No, no,” cried Pelf, “ water indeed ! why you will have a floating island of ice in your stomach, Mifs, if you drink your water unqualified this nipping weather. What say you to a glass of wine along with me ?”

“ I'll take one mixed with water,” said Rachel.

“ Well, Mifs, better so than plain,” answered the jailor.

The wine was brought and drunk.

“ Vell, Mifs, what say you to a crumb of pudden now ?” asked Mrs. Pelf.

Rachel felt confused any longer to refuse taking something upon her plate, thus accepted the pudding, but hastily exclaimed, “ No sauce, thank you, Ma'am !” as she saw Mrs. Pelf fishing up for her, from the bottom of the dish, a large spoonful of almost cold grease. Had Rachel's appetite been keener than it now was, she would have felt an insuperable disgust arise upon her, on attempting to eat the viands now before her ; they were not only so different in quality and kind to those she had been accustomed to taste, but also so extremely opposite in appearance and cleanliness to the dishes she usually saw brought to table, that it required very much self-persuasion to introduce the first morsel of Mrs. Pelf's pudding into her mouth, and an effort, of which she did not before think herself capable, to swallow it.

Mrs. Pelf, who observed that Rachel's first mouthful was an extraordinary long time in her opinion in passing through her throat, cried, “ Dear Mifs, I am sure it eats dry without gravy ; do have a little to help it down,” and following her words, by putting some of the before-mentioned fat upon her plate, rendered it a task beyond Rachel's most strained efforts to take another mouthful.—“ You must excuse

cuse me, Ma'am," she said: " my heart is too full to leave me any appetite."

" Dear me, dear me!" ejaculated Mrs. Pelf.—
" Vell, a bit of cheese may-hap by and by?"

Rachel bowed, happy to be so easily excused pursuing her task of eating the pudding; she then leaned back in her chair, and put her hand to her forehead, which ached violently.

" Vill you accept my salts, Ma'am?" asked Miss Caroline, presenting them. " I dare say, Ma'am, they vill give you relief; I am wery narwous myself, and I find an infinitude of service from 'em."

Rachel accepted them gratefully; she had some time much wished for a temporary relief of the kind, and was unable to afford it to herself, Sir Flat Fire not having returned her the smelling-bottle which she had lent him at Lady Paragon's ball. As she received the bottle from the hand of her that offered it, she was led for the first time to view her person. Miss Caroline, as she sat, appeared to be near six feet high; her face was extremely masculine and impudent; her hair was vulgarly dressed, and powdered, literally, as white as snow; on her head she wore a black velvet hat adorned with pink ribbands, in the front of which was stuck a bunch of cock-tail feathers, which all hung dropping in one direction over the verge of the hat, exactly as the bird itself would have held them, had he been at roost upon her head, with his tail raised parallel to her nose; waist she had none; under her arms was tied a blue silk sash, which reached to her ankles;—her sleeves were turned up in rolls above her elbows, which were red and coarse; black bracelets and gold clasps adorned her wrists, and glass rings her fingers, on which there were not two nails of equal size; and to complete the attraction of her person, her feet were adorned with red high-lows, and her cheeks with carmine. This was the lady who pronounced herself to be *narwous*.

Splitfire, the highwayman, who had hitherto been too busily employed in the exercise of his teeth, to spare

spare time for employing his tongue in conversation, now gave the signal for his meal being finished, by letting his knife and fork fall from his hands upon his plate, and challenging Pelf to a flash of lightning.

"Ay, to be sure, Captain," (Splitfire's nick name,) "I thought I wanted something to make my dinner sit easy, and you have just put me in mind what it is," answered Pelf.

The gin bottle was immediately brought, and they each drank to Rachel's health.

"Now, Molly, gi' us the cheese and a clean knife, and set it here by me," said Mrs. Pelf.

Her directions were followed, and Rachel's disgust was again raised, though she had pre-determined to eat, as she felt afraid of offending her hostess if she did not; for no plates being allowed at this second course of cheese, the respective pieces cut for the party were laid by Mrs. Pelf's knife before them upon the table cloth, whose colour was hardly discernible from the number of grease spots with which it was speckled. She managed to eat a little, and then drank another glass of water.

"Dear Miss, I'm sure you'll get the kolick," cried Caroline, "with drinking so much cold water.—Molly, gi'me some brandy and water.—You'll think it komakul, I dare say, Ma'am, to see a young lady drink likurs; but really my spirits is so wery veek, I can't keeps 'em up at all without a few drops of 'em to my meals; and I'm narwus enough as it is, I'm sure."

After the cloth was removed, wine, brandy, and gin were put upon the table. Rachel was pressed to drink, and accepted a glass of port. Miss Caroline refilled her tumbler, which she declared "Molly had mixed so veek at first that it only made her cold instead of varming her." Splitfire threw off bumpers of wine, into which he regularly poured some brandy—and Mr. and Mrs. Pelf drank freely when invited by Splitfire to fill their glasses, and only then, for of the two bottles of red wine placed upon the table, one was added to the score of the highwayman, and the

the other commenced that of Rachel; so the jailor and his wife drank only at the expense of their prisoners.

Splitfire gave toasts of vengeance against the laws and the devil; Pelf humoured him in any conceit that induced him to swallow liquor; and Mrs. Pelf drank continually out of Rachel's bottle, to set her the example, as she kindly told her, of not being afraid to take a glass or two extraordinary to keep up her spirits.

Presently the maid half opened the door, and putting in her head, said, "Miss Carline, your child cries."

"Bring him down to me then, Molly," answered Miss Caroline.

Rachel felt surprised, but said nothing.

A boy, of about a year old, was brought in, and placed by Molly upon Caroline's lap.

Rachel looked at the child as it lay, and her features doubtless betrayed a look of inquiry, which she did not intend they should convey; for Miss Caroline immediately said, in a tone divided between shame and audacity, "Ah, Miss, every body has their misfortins; you has yourn, and this brat is mine."

"His father was the first man I ever see hanged," cried the son, whose voice had not yet been heard by Rachel.

"Hold you your tongue, sirrah, will you?" said Pelf, and snapping his fingers in the boy's face, brought the tears into his eyes; which he retorted on his father, by a wry face directed at his back, as soon as he turned round his head.

"I wonder, Sir," exclaimed Miss Caroline, "how you dares remind me of such a kritkal circumstance, you saucy imp you, when you knows how weak and narwus my spirits is to this wery day." She then without farther ceremony or apology began to suckle her boy.

Rachel was all astonishment at what she saw and heard, vexation at being where she was, and grief at being so unjustly constrained to bear such scenes of disgust and horror.

C H A P.

CHAP. X.

An old Friend with a new Face.

IN a short time Splitfire fell asleep in an arm-chair by the fire side, to which he had removed after dinner;—the jailor and his son left the room to visit some of the prisoners; and Miss Caroline, having again lulled to sleep her boy and carried him up to bed, put on her cloak, and telling her mother she was going to call upon a friend, went out.

Rachel was now left in fact alone with Mrs. Pelf, who soon began to inquire the cause of her visit to their house; of which Rachel immediately recounted the leading circumstances, and then asked Mrs. Pelf's opinion and advice, who answered her in vague terms of complaisant pity, which seemed to give little credit to her innocence.

The tea hour arrived without any interruption to their tete-a-tete; when the maid entered with the requisites for the meal, Mrs. Pelf ordered her to call in her master.

Presently Pelf returned. "That young fellow," he said, "that came in for debt this morning, is half-distracted yonder for want of company, and praying like bewitched to come down amongst us, especially now I tells him we have got a nice bit of a young lady here."

"Vell, and vhy does not you let him, Numps?" asked Mrs. Pelf.

"I'm afraid of the scrip," answered the husband. "I can't find that he has above three shiners in the world, and he seems mighty shy of writing to friends or any body. I've been talking with him above there."

"Vell, vell, vhy, three guineas is money;" said Mrs. Pelf, with a look and voice that meant, "that's better worth having than nothing."

"He seems a good smart chap," cried Pelf.

"Vell, then hand him in, Numps, and he'll help to be kumpany for Miss here."

"I don't

"I don't wish for any additional society, Ma'am," said Rachel.

Pelf left the room without answering, and returning again in a few minutes' time, introduced John Morden.

On seeing him, Rachel uttered a faint shriek, which she endeavoured in vain to suppress; his coat had been torn across the shoulder in the scuffle that had attended his arrest; his hair was untied, and hung in disorder down his back; and his eyes and lips bore strong marks of the effects of the liquor which he had swallowed to dissipate thought. "Come, this will do better, than that dull place above stairs," said John, looking round without noticing Rachel, and without having heard, or at least having listened to, the scream she had uttered on his entrance, and throwing himself into a chair by the tea-table, which he nearly overturned in taking his seat.

Rachel rose and stood opposite to him; "John Morden!" said she in a voice composed of sorrow and tenderness—"John Morden!"

He looked vaguely upon her for some moments: a complication of sorrowful ideas met in her brain, and she burst into tears: they recalled his wandering senses. "Rachel? Oh, Rachel, Rachel!" he exclaimed; his utterance became almost choaked as he spoke the last syllable: a long gasp recovered him expression, and he added, "D—n it, Rachel, I am not so bad as you think me."

He jumped up and took her hand in both his; she staggered back to the chair she had just left; he followed, still holding her hand. "Oh! if your father knew this!" she said.

"Never think of that," returned John, a little recovered from the effects of the wine by the surprise of seeing Rachel. "If you don't betray me, he never will; and I think you won't, as you are come here to be my friend."

Rachel held her hand before her face in silence.

"It was very good of you, Rachel, to come here after me; how did you hear of my—— what the devil

devil shall I call it?—Very kind of you indeed;—but have you money enough to let me out?—I'm deeper in than you may think for:—or will Sir Gilbert let——”

“ Oh, John!” she interrupted him, “ have you yet to learn, that I am here a more miserable wretch than yourself?”

“ You?—You?—Rachel in prison?—Who?—How?”—He paused a moment; then continued—“ Is not this some trick? something between you and Miss Oxmondeley?—some——”

“ No; by the Lord Harry it is true enough,” cried the jailor;—“ that young lady is as fast tied down here in my shop as the law can bind her.”

When John Morden erred, it was his head, and not his heart, that was in fault. The fumes of liquor instantly evaporated: the distress of one to whom he had been united by all the ties of fraternity except blood, expelled the vapour; and he exclaimed in a clear voice, while the tears started into his eyes—“ For Heaven's sake explain.”—Pelf was beginning to speak, when Rachel interrupted him by saying, “ Pray, Sir, will you be so good as to show this gentleman and myself to any place where we may be a short time by ourselves?”

“ Oh yes, to be sure, Miss,” replied Pelf; “ if you have any secrets to talk over betwixt yourselves, I'll show you into a room in a minute.” He lighted a candle. “ They that knows Humphry Pelf, knows he has all manner of accommodation for them that have got the scrip; and as Mr. Blackman said he would be answerable for your bills, why I ain't afraid, Miss. He walked towards the door; and John Morden led Rachel a few steps after him; when stopping, and looking full in Rachel's face, he said, “ These here wrists of yours ought to have a bit of a bracelet on 'em though Miss; it is not the right thing of me, to let you out of my sight without.” He gave his head a sagacious shake; then added: “ Well, come, you seems a civil-disposed person, I must say; and so, to favour you, it shall go down in the bill.”

He

He then led them through the kitchen, which joined the parlour, into a small room without a fire, and whose only furniture was a wooden chair and table; upon the latter of which having placed the candle, he went out and locked the door upon them, having first told them to knock against it when they wished to come out.

Rachel spoke first:—"Oh, my dear brother!" she cried—"for such, misfortune renders you more than ever,—in what a situation are we met!—Oh! what an afflicting scene were this to our benefactor, our father!—Thank God, he knows not what is passing."

"Spare comments, I entreat you," said John; and tell me why you are here."

In a few words as the story of her imprisonment could be divulged, Rachel related it.

John Morden was as passionate in his virtues as in his foibles; he saw, he felt, that Rachel was innocent: yet he had no proofs with which to produce conviction in the minds of her accusers and the world at large: the feelings of his mind were too acute for restraint; and he vented them for some moments in curses and asseverations of Rachel's honour, unheard by those against whom they were directed. When sufficiently composed for reflection, he said, "Write instantly to my father, I conjure you, Rachel; one line will bring him to your defence: think not of me; he must find me where I am: your case is of too much importance for any scruples relative to me to be considered."

"Can I call a father to witness the disgrace of his son?—Can I wound the heart of him who has been more than parent to me, with the sharpest sting nature has formed for a parental breast?—Oh no! I can ill enough repay him the debt of tenderness I owe him now; how could I *ever* repay to him the heart-ache he must suffer here?"

"Then, by heaven, I'll write myself," said John Morden.

"If you value my friendship, and your father's peace, lay aside the thought."

"Well,

"Well, but could not you address Parkinson?" asked he.

"He is not at Hilden; and I know not where to address him:—the last letter I received from your honoured father, mentioned that he was that day to set out for the north, where he meant to continue a month."

"Distraction and devils!" cried John.

"Pray be calm," said Rachel; "passion cannot assist us; cool deliberation may.—What are your debts?—By what unguarded means can you, in so short a time since your arrival here, have incurred expences to reduce you to a prison?—How can you have expended the money necessary for your maintenance, with which I am sure your father would not fail to provide you before you left him?"

"Oh, Rachel! you know almost as well as myself how that went; it slipped away in such a variety of wants, that my memory won't supply me with an accurate account of its expenditure: there are so many things that one really can't do without in London, which one hardly dreams of in the country, and that men like my father will scarcely allow to exist, and declare absolutely unnecessary when they do, that it is utterly impossible to live on a pittance like my allowance. The half year's allowance that I brought up with me was gone in a crack."

"Oh, John Morden! why will not men learn, that, beyond the wants of nature, all others may be reduced to the ability we possess to acquire them: it is as criminal to incur a debt we have no prospect of paying, as to steal the amount: reflect, then, a moment, and tell me, whether you can bear the stigma of dishonesty."

"If you were a man, Rachel, you would know that you must keep yourself on a par with your acquaintance, to be thought of like them."

"No, no," cried Rachel, "it is a false shame that runs into determined error, to avoid the censure of the world."

"Well, I know it is, Rachel, I know it is; but circum-

circumstance makes fools and knaves of many a one that is not so in his nature."

"It is useless," replied Rachel, "to say any more on the past; but for Heaven's sake"—she took his hand; let me caution you seriously on the future: again, let me represent to you the feelings of a father, who, having already exerted his utmost ability for the welfare of a son, is constrained to see him linger out his existence in a prison, to which folly and dissipation have driven him; or to release him at the expence of the comforts of his own existence, and to the prejudice of his other children, who have never been faulty; and what security has he then for his not again following the same deluding steps of temptation to err?—When the reins of moral conduct have been once slackened, it is very difficult for the most repentant again to tighten them."

"Indeed, Rachel, you are too hard upon me," interrupted John; "I have not been vicious; I have only tried to be in the fashion."

"The worst aim, believe me, my dear John, that a young man can follow; it is the origin of every misery and vice. It is fashion that prompts man to outrun the ability of his purse; thence it is fashion, or, what is the same, the custom of the fashionable, that has forbid the needy tradesman to apply for the discharge of his bills. It is fashion that first courts men to the gaming table, and pride and necessity continue them its desperate votaries.—It is fashion, which, by holding honest trade beneath notice, drives many, with hearts well disposed by nature, but depraved by art, to the road to suicide—to public execution."

"I own it," replied John; "I know it is so; but I only meant to be fashionable in moderation."

"It is a difficult matter to fix bounds to our progress on an enticing path which we have once entered, or to restrain our steps from erring beyond those limits, if we have determined them in our own imagination. It is a much safer and more commendable

mendable plan, not to expose ourselves to the temptation of being deluded into doing wrong."

John struck his forehead with the palm of his hand, but did not answer.

"What is your present debt?" continued Rachel.

"I'm here at the suit of a fellow that I had a horse and gig of."

"What do you owe him?"

"Why, I paid him twenty pounds at the time I had it: I owe him sixty more."

"It is my all," thought Rachel; "but is it not the son of him to whom I owe all?—Yes, I will release him, and forego the comforts that sum might have procured me here:—but then, shall I not in fact be assisting Miss Oxmondeley in the very plan against which I have so strongly admonished her?—This day and night were appointed as the time in which she would meet him; perhaps, if she should now go to his lodgings, and learn that he is in prison, it may have some weight in changing her resolution. I will not afford him my assistance till they are past. It is as possible," she also considered, "from the manner in which Miss Oxmondeley desired him to resolve the important question in her letter, that he has not, as that he has, received it. I will not inquire, lest I should lead to a discovery I should not wish to make."

During these moments, which had been passed in thought by Rachel, John had been walking hastily backwards and forwards along the little space the apartment afforded him; and now, stopping opposite to Rachel, who had seated herself in the chair, he exclaimed: "How devilishly unfortunate too, to be cooped up here at the very hour when my fortune might have been made for ever!"

Rachel suspected his meaning; but affecting not to know it, she inquired its import.

"You *must* know, that I mean with Miss Oxmondeley—dear! divine! spirited girl! You were in all her secrets, and *must* know that she was going to run away with me this very night."

"And

"And did you really mean to encourage her in so romantic, so wild a step?" asked Rachel.

"Do you really mean to ask," returned he, "whether I can hear a woman declare she loves me, and will buy me a commission, without adoring her?"

"John! John! your spirits are again mastering your reason; analyse that adoration you just now so emphatically pronounced, and tell me candidly, whether it is that affection you ought to feel for a woman who is about to become your wife?"

"Yes, yes, I can declare it is," answered John immediately, at the same time enforcing his argument by stamping his foot two or three times successively on the floor; "I can declare it is; for as I never loved any woman seriously before, I have formed a resolution of never loving any but her."

"And how long will this resolution last?" said Rachel.

"For ever!" cried John; "for ever, for ever! She offers to make me supremely happy, and I must love her while I have breath. Oh! 'tis distraction to be shut up here, and the finest woman in the kingdom waiting to——"

At this instant the door opened, and Pelf put in his head;—"Miss," he said, "here's Mr. Blackman wants to speak with you."

"I'll come presently," she answered.

"You must come directly, Miss, he says," returned Pelf; for there is somebody more wants to see you besides him."

"I'll follow you, then," she answered; "John, I shall see you here again."

"No doubt of that, I fear," he replied.

Rachel left the room; Pelf followed her, and again locked the door; saying to John, "I'll be with you in a minute, Sir;" and then reconducted her into his parlour, where she was met by Blackman.

"I'm sorry, my dear ma'am," he immediately said, on seeing her, "to hear that you have not taken care to provide yourself with a comfortable apartment.

apartment. Mr. Pelf says you did not express your wish to him ; but I have taken care to have one provided for you within these few minutes : let me show you to it ; I know the way of this house, and Mr. Pelf will excuse me."

" Oh, certainly, certainly, Mr. Blackman ; I know you are a safe man," answered Pelf ; and Blackman then led Rachel from another door, which opened out of the parlour, along a short passage ; at the extremity of which, a few stairs conducted them to a small closet, through which was a neat bed-chamber : in the chimney a fire appeared to have been just lighted ; and upon the table stood two candles.

" Well, ma'am," said Blackman, " I am happy to say I have good news for you ; a gentleman—you will hardly guess who—has heard of your misfortune ; and as he declares he believes you innocent, he is determined to see justice done to you."

" Who can be this kind friend ?" asked Rachel.

" Why, it must not be known for the world," answered Blackman, " that he takes any part in your favour ; because, as he is particularly intimate in Sir Gilbert's family, it might be thought extremely odd, and perhaps unhandsome in him, to be on your side ; but he is a man that acts from principle ; and, feeling for your sufferings, cannot forbear to offer you his consolation, and exert his powers in your behalf, whether they are allowed to benefit you or not."

" I shall nevertheless owe him my gratitude," said Rachel.

" So I told him," cried Blackman, " when he first mentioned to me that he had heard your distress, and wished to become your friend. I said to him, ' Miss Ellis,' said I, ' has too noble a heart not to be grateful for a friendly intention, be its event what it may.'"

" Indeed, Sir, you spoke my feelings ; I thank you for it," returned Rachel.

" He is now here in the prison," replied Blackman ; " I'll conduct him to your apartment immediately."—

diately."—He moved towards the door; arrived at it, he stopped short and added, "You'll be careful in not letting Sir Gilbert's family know of his interference."

"He has a claim upon me to demand it," said Rachel; and Blackman left the room.

"Who can this kind, this generous stranger be," Rachel inquired of herself, "that is sufficiently benevolent to take interest in my fate?" She recollected many countenances which she had been in the habit of seeing at Sir Gilbert's, that had always looked upon her with complacency; but she did not remember a face which had borne the positive marks of a philanthropist, and which she might now conclude to be her visitor.

In a few moments she heard footsteps on the stairs—a person with a great coat, and a hat with a remarkably deep brim, appeared the closet adjoining to her chamber, and shut the outward door after him as he entered; he then advanced into her chamber, and his face meeting the light of the candles, she perceived the person of Sir Bauble Paragon.

The circulation of her blood was arrested, her knees knocked, and she sunk into a chair gasping for breath, and unable to speak, had she been resolved what to say.

Throwing off his hat and great coat, he advanced hastily to her side, and supporting her almost sinking frame, said, "Most divine girl! how my heart bleeds to see you in this wretched place!"

With extreme difficulty, Rachel obtained her utterance; and raising her body from his support, she said: "Why did you not, then, spare my wretchedness the additional insult to those which you have already offered me, of seeing you in it?"

"Is it possible," he cried, "that the regards of love and esteem can draw so harsh a return from the tongue of beauty?"

"Did I but see you now for the first time, Sir Bauble, the words you utter might delude me. But recollect that I have known you before."

"But

"But imperfectly, believe me; you have only seen me when a necessary restraint bound my tongue, though it could not smother the feelings of my heart."

"If but to tell me this, was the occasion of your present visit, Sir, excuse my saying I should have been happy to have been spared it. How, Sir, could you answer to Miss Oxmondeley your conduct to me?"

"As her friend, I fly to your assistance," he returned. "As your friend, I must enforce your acceptance of my services; your angelic conduct in not disclosing to Miss Oxmondeley the ardour with which you had inspired me, claims my warmest requital and friendship."

"I have already explained to you the motive of my secrecy in regard to an instance of your conduct, which, if you had any feeling, ought to cover you with shame, when you recollect the exposure you have made to me of your infidelity and dishonour; and with terror, when you remember that it is at my discretion, whether or not to expose you for a hypocrite to the world."

Sir Bauble felt that Rachel spoke truth; and, stung by being reproached in a language which he did not perceive it a very easy matter to confute, he answered, "It would be but just in me to retort, that you, for whose sake I condescended to this, ought to be the last person to turn my adoration for you into a threat against myself, much less when lying under the criminal law in a prison." This sentence was delivered in a tone of mixed sarcasm and malignant pity, which drew tears of indignation into the eyes of Rachel, and she said: "Not the scaffold, much less the sneers of a disappointed passion, should awe me into concealing a sentiment I feel to be just."

"You may avoid both," said he, softening.—"Place confidence in my friendship, and I will ensure you an immediate retreat from the ills that are hovering round you."

"I have

"I have a much more friendly retreat to fly to within my own breast," she returned; "one, in whose fidelity I can confide."

"Equity and law are two distinct things," returned Sir Bauble; "and however innocent you may know yourself to be, yet were you to be condemned upon the appearance of guilt under which you now lie accused, that internal friend might not prove so consolatory as you now picture it to yourself."

Sir Bauble had now in his turn spoken a truth which Rachel could not confute, and she paused in tears.

"Well, belle ange," he continued, "are you softened into avowing that the deceits of love are not the heinous crimes you just now declared them to be? Will you condescend to pardon a fault, of which your own charms had urged the commission?—Miss Oxmondeley will have my hand, but you will have the disposal of my heart, my life." He fell on one knee, and took her hand in his. "Don't you recollect," he continued, kissing it with ecstasy—"don't you recollect with what fervour I pleaded my passion at the masquerade, the first night I ever was blest with your sight?"

"Sir Bauble, leave me, I conjure you. I command you to leave me."

He continued on one knee, and still held her hand, which she struggled to release. "Only tell me whether you recollect that," he cried. "I had never seen Miss Oxmondeley then; consider that you answered me more kindly then. Come, Come, you recollect you did." He again eagerly kissed her hand. "Confess you recollect it," he added.

Too well did Rachel recollect that night with all its attendant and subsequent circumstances; she recollected the seeing of his face when he lifted his mask; she recollected that she did not then hate it; she recollected his words as he was passing to the supper-room; she recollected, how she had spent the hours of sleep; those she remembered had been moments in which pleasure had held no small share.

Then

Then burst upon her brain the bitter flood of provocations that had followed those short moments—the scene at the theatre; his first introduction to Miss Oxmondeley; his language on the night of the ball; his present insulting solicitation; her nature shrunk from the treachery it had undergone, from the humiliation she was suffering. “Wretch! Monster!” escaped inarticulately from her lips, and she sunk on the floor.

Sir Bauble threw himself by her side, and endeavoured by every effort he was acquainted with to recall her into life without seeking assistance in the house. Whilst thus employed, a noise in the passage, caused by the jarring voices of Pelf, Blackman, and a stranger, called his attention in some measure from Rachel. “Curse me, but I’ll see her,” was all he could distinguish of what the stranger said; and, “Indeed, Sir, she not well enough,” all that he heard to issue from Blackman’s lips; and between these two Pelf seemed to be the moderator.

In a few minutes Rachel’s eyes opened, and her voice articulated some indistinct sounds, which showed her to be recovering. Sir Bauble raised her head on his arm, and by an irresistible impulse, pressed his lips upon hers; drawing aside her head from his with all the remaining strength she possessed, she shrieked out in the most piercing accents for help.—Immediately the voice of the stranger, who was contending in the passage with Blackman and Pelf, called out, “That is she, by Heaven! She calls for help, and I will see her.” In a couple of seconds the closet door, which had not been locked, was thrown open, and John Morden rushed in.

Rachel sprang up, and throwing herself upon his neck, cried, “Save me! Protect me! Save me!”

John placed her in a chair, and then advancing to Sir Bauble, he said, “Who are you, Sir? and what insult have you been offering to this lady, to cause her the alarm in which I found her?”

Sir Bauble, who had as dastardly a spirit when confronting

a man, as he possessed an impudent one in facing a woman, turned round to John, and, with a bow, answered, "That he had been only offering his friendship and services to the lady as a friend of the family in which she had resided; and that the lady, he was sorry to say, had been unfortunately taken suddenly very ill."

John Morden, who had seen Sir Bauble with Miss Oxmondeley in the shop in Oxford-street the preceding morning, recollected the sound of his voice, and immediately said, "It is possible your account may be true; but I beg leave to refer it to the lady."

Sir Bauble moved towards the door, and said, "he was very willing to end the contest by departing."

"No, Sir," said John, detaining him, "I insist on hearing your account verified or contradicted by the lady before you leave the room—Speak, Rachel, how was it? why did you call for assistance?"

"I wished to be alone, and Sir Bauble refused to grant me the indulgence."

"Do you hear, Sir?" said John.

"I do, Sir," he returned, "and am ready to comply with the lady's request when I have your permission."

"Then leave the apartment instantly," said John; "and recollect, Sir Bauble, that the very next time I hear of your intruding yourself into it, I shall only allow you your choice of the pistols you saw me purchase yesterday morning.—Now, begone!"

Sir Bauble made a motion to stoop for his hat and great coat; John snatched them up, and having thrown them out at the door, Sir Bauble followed almost as expeditiously as if he had shared their fate.

CHAP. XI.

Hope.

"**I**NSIGNIFICANT rascal!" cried John, shutting the door of the chamber: "I wish I had time for

a pop at him now ; but however, I think I have done enough to deter him from troubling you any more by my threats, and he can't know that I shan't be in London to execute it. I am going away this very minute, Rachel ; I have got my discharge ; here's a letter full of bank-notes from the divine Miss Oxmondeley, written from my lodgings ; I am to use what I want of them to defray my debts, and to fly to her with the rest."

"Does she mention me?" inquired Rachel, eagerly.

"No, no, she does not," he returned. "I suppose she forgot it in her hurry and fright ; but as I know she would have done it if she had thought of it, I'll be her proxy ; take that twenty pound note, my dear Rachel : you know you can write to my father now, immediately, without any scruples on my account. You need not know any thing about me, without you choose it ; and I had rather you should not ; you understand.—There, that," presenting the note, "will last you till he arrives."

"I have money, thank you John," she replied : "you will want its services yourself : return it into your pocket ; I have sufficient money indeed."

"Have you, upon your soul?—Well then, God bless you, give me a kiss ; keep up your spirits : you are safe enough, even if you were guilty, which I know you are not ; for I heard Pelf tell his wife, no jury could bring you in guilty, as the stolen property was found by the owner without witnesses ; and as to Sir Bauble's impertinence, you need not be afraid of that, for if he had not the recollection of my pistols being at his service, he will be too busy running hue and cry with Sir Gilbert after his lost bride, to trouble you ; so, once more, God bless you!" Again he kissed her. Rachel returned his embrace with fervor ; to speak, she was not able. "Good bye!" cried John, and ran out of the chamber ; Rachel followed him with her eyes till he disappeared, and then burst into tears.

"Eliza is then happy herself, and forgets the distresses of her poor friend," thought Rachel. "Or is

is she yet so unjust as to believe her guilty?—Oh cruelty of nature, that innocence cannot prove itself!—How inexplicable is the ordination of providence when it suffers the guilty to triumph and the innocent to suffer! But then, how soothing the certainty of an hereafter that shall repay our calamities with the purest blessings!—How little have I known of the great world, yet how much have I seen of its complicated vices!—Whom have I known, beyond the friends that reared my youth, whom the allurements of this world's temptations have not swayed into the practice of some vice?—And have I not been faulty too?" she asked herself. "Is it arrogance to answer my own heart, that I feel no remorse of conscience?—It may be so; but it must be a venial pride to be secretly happy from reflection in the gloom of a prison."

When her thoughts had some time dwelt alternately upon the mystery attending the jewels of Miss Oxmondeley being secreted in her trunk; the baseness of Sir Bauble in presuming upon the humiliation of her body, to attempt the degradation of her mind; the romantic elopement of Eliza, who must have found means that day of selling her jewels, and then flying with the money to John Morden's lodgings; the unthinking conduct of John Morden himself, not only in the present instance, but still more in that which had reduced him to a prison; and lastly upon the many hours of happiness she had passed at the parsonage of Hilden, and the many more she anticipated there to enjoy; recollecting that the sorrowful pleasure of indulging thought might be wisely bartered for such action as she was able to use in her own behalf, she entered Pelf's parlour, and requested some writing paper, a pen, and ink, which the jailer immediately went in search of for her.

"You has missed your tea, Miss," said Mrs. Pelf to Rachel, while she waited for the articles she had required. "Would not you chuse a cup now in your own room, may hap?"

"No, thank you, Ma'am," Rachel answered.

"Vell, as you pleases, Miss. "Ve'll have supper a bit sooner then to commodate you."

"There is no occasion for that, Ma'am," replied Rachel, and Pelf re-entering, she received the articles he had brought at his hand, and returned with them to her chamber.

Having determined not to address her letter directly to Mr. Morden, lest she should cause him a more than necessary alarm, she wrote an account of her situation, and as much as she was acquainted with of the causes that had reduced her to it, to Mrs. Eringham, to whose friendship she trusted to break it to the curate. As she was sealing her letter, Pelf entered the apartment, and gave her a note, which he said had just been left for her.

"Does any body wait?" she asked.

"No, the boy who brought it went away as soon as he had delivered it," answered Pelf; he then departed, and Rachel opened the note; its contents were as follows:—

"The gentleman, who this evening offered to become your friend, for the last time addresses you.

Unless you listen to the under-written liberal proposals—the extensive advantages of which if you do not see and accept, you must be insensible to your own happiness and welfare—you will be rescued from prison, indemnified from all farther concern, relative to the charge on which you now stand accused; you will be placed in an elegant house, of which you will be the mistress, and provided with servants, carriages, and money; and in return for all this happiness you are only required to smile on their bestower, who will to-morrow evening in person await your decisive answer,"

The gentleman here mentioned was of course Sir Bauble, and he offered to indemnify her from all farther concern relative to the charge on which she stood accused; thus, Rachel was immediately convinced in her own mind, that he must be able to arraign the person really guilty, or that he by villanous means had caused the suspicion of fraud to be thrown upon

upon her ; and considering it a duty she owed both to Sir Gilbert and herself to have the matter, if possible, cleared, now she imagined she had found a clue to its developement, she determined to write an account of Sir Bauble's past conduct towards her to Sir Gilbert, inclosing in it the note she had just received.

That Blackman was the agent of Sir Bauble, and that a plot against her honour, which Miss Oxmondeley's jewels were designed to forward, was carrying on between them, she no longer doubted.— All she feared was, that Sir Gilbert's prejudice in favour of the husband he had chosen for his daughter, might blind him to her tale of truth, which had but slender evidence in its favour, besides her words, as the note she had just received was neither directed nor signed. However, in her present situation, she resolved to let slip no chance of evincing her innocence ; and having finished her two letters, she sought Pelf, and requested him to let them be carried immediately to the post office.

Pelf readily agreed to go with them himself ; but the letter for Hildden, he told her, could not go till Monday, as the post was gone out that night, and no letters left London on a Sunday : the town letter, he said, he would take care should be delivered in an hour or two.

When Pelf returned, Rachel was summoned to supper ; and, all hope and anxiety, she ate a scanty meal ; and, directly on the cloth being removed, retired to her chamber, on the plea of going to rest ; in reality, disgusted by the scene around her ; for Miss Caroline, who was returned, seemed to have brought the friend, on whom she had told her mother she was going to call, home to supper with her ; as a serjeant of the guards, who had not attended the former meals, appeared at the supper-table, and comported himself very lovingly towards the young lady.

CHAP. XII.

Which proves that Misfortunes never come single.

SIR Gilbert's morning and afternoon passed, much as the day had begun to him, in a state of grumbling yet triumphant disquietude: the accustomed hour, which brought Blackman, gave his spirits a little relief; and he asked advice of him, whether or not he judged it becoming in him to write to Mr. Morden, and inform him of Rachel's guilt, or to leave that to her whom it most concerned;—which latter Blackman advised.

The soothing pipe quickly lulled him into a nap; and when he awoke from it, and Blackman was departed, he entered the tea-room, where he expected to find his daughter preparing another composer of his spirits; but the fire was out, the room dark, and no tea prepared. The Baronet stepped back into the passage, and saluted the house with a loud “Holla!” a summons much more common from him to his domestics, than the ringing of a bell.

A footman immediately appeared with a note, which he said Miss Oxmondeley had ordered him to give to Sir Gilbert as soon as he awoke.

The Baronet took it; and on reading it, his whole frame became convulsed: its contents were—

“SIR,

“I have flown from your tyranny to the man with whom alone I can be blest. If you value my life, don't pursue me; for I have prepared myself with a draught of death, which I will immediately swallow, if you regain me into your power before I am the wife of him I fly with. I am nevertheless your affectionate, though driven by your cruelty to subscribe myself your undutiful, daughter,

“ELIZA.”

Madness

Madness would have been almost a mockery of Sir Gilbert's vehement rage : his cheeks swelled, till his eyes and nose were nearly hid by their expansion : to articulate he was unable ; action was the only power left him : his hands were employed in tearing the cravat from his throat, in which his breath struggled in vain for some moments to circulate ; and his feet, in stamping upon the floor.

When speech returned, the confusion of ideas and plans that met in his brain rendered him for many minutes unintelligible, by not suffering him to complete a single sentence ; and his anger then burst upon the servants who were collected round him, that they did not immediately understand and execute the commands he meant to convey to them, and which he himself imagined he really was delivering.

" Blackman !"—" Sir Bauble !"—" Fetch them here directly !" were all the words in which he could make himself comprehended ; and two of the servants immediately ran in search of them.

Half an hour's time exhausted Sir Gilbert's spirits to the weakness of infancy ; and tears, with sounds composed of feeble shrieks and groans, were all the powers he could exert to explain his misery. Seeing him reduced to this state, Mrs. Coke wisely took upon herself his management ; and having ordered his bed to be warmed, she had him carried to his chamber, undressed, and put into it, whilst she endeavoured to sooth him against using his little remaining strength to oppose their efforts.

Presently the servants returned with information, that both Sir Bauble and Blackman were out, and that they had not been able to obtain any information where to find them.

" Rascals—you are bribed—have you hanged—rascals !" was all Sir Gilbert could articulate in return for their intelligence.

Judging it expedient that her master should be seen by a physician, Mrs. Coke immediately dispatched

patched one of the footmen to request the presence of the gentleman who usually attended Sir Gilbert's family.

In a few minutes time arrived Lady Paragon, in her own chair; who, having heard from Sir Gilbert's servant, that had gone in search of Sir Bauble, the sad tidings, came, as a party concerned, to offer her advice and assistance.

On her entering the parlour, and hearing from Mrs. Coke a more minute detail of Sir Gilbert's illness and its cause, Lady Paragon's frame underwent a short convulsion, necessary to the support of her character, from which salts and vinegar soon recovered her; and Mrs. Coke then asked, "Whether her Ladyship would step up stairs and speak to her master;" adding, "that perhaps her presence might recall his reason."

"Heaven knows," replied Lady Paragon in answer to Mrs. Coke's demand, "how infinitely I value the welfare of the amiable Sir Gilbert; how much I would do for his consolation and happiness; but to visit a man in bed! the sarcasms of the world stab so deeply in a female's reputation!"

"Suppose your Ladyship considers of it a few minutes," returned Mrs. Coke; "I'll come down to you again very shortly; but I must go and see that Sir Gilbert is properly attended to."

"Do you think him so very bad, then, Mrs. Coke?"

"I do, indeed, my Lady."

"Well then, as he is so very bad, I think there can be no harm in my just speaking to him with the chamber-door open, if you go in first and draw the curtains round the bed."

Mrs. Coke led the way, and Lady Paragon followed; arrived at the top of the first flight of stairs, which led to Sir Gilbert's chamber, the Baronet in his night-cap, flannel-waistcoat, and drawers, proceeding down stairs with all the expedition he was able, and offering ten guineas to any one who could tell him where John Morden lived in London, met them
front

front to front:—a loud shriek issued from the lips of Lady Paragon, and she hid her face in her muff.

"Oh, my Lady!" exclaimed the Baronet, "I am mad, distracted, crazy; a'n't you mad? a'n't Sir Bauble mad?" his hand was meanwhile laid upon her muff, and attempting to pull it from her face.

"Sir Gilbert, for Heaven's sake desist! Sir Gilbert, you kill me!"

"Me, my Lady?—Why, to be sure, you can't suppose it is my doing; I could fell her at my feet, if she now stood before me, for her disobedience!" The energy with which this last sentence was pronounced, descended into the Baronet's very fingers; for, as he concluded it, he snatched the muff, by a violent effort, from Lady Paragon's hand. Again her Ladyship shrieked, and hid her face in Mrs. Coke's gown. Sam now advanced with Sir Gilbert's morning-gown, and he suffered it to be put on; again repeating his offer of ten guineas for the knowledge of John Morden's habitation.

"Oh, I know where he lodges," cried Sam, surprised out of his secrecy by the baronet's liberal offer; for he it was who had been Miss Oxmondeley's messenger to the hospital.

"What! then, you have been the go-between, you rascal, have you?" said Sir Gilbert.

"No, upon my soul, nor, Sir Gilbert," replied Sam; "I never in my life carried a message from Miss to the gentleman, or brought one from him to her."

"You'll be hanged for a cheat, an impostor, and a liar," cried Sir Gilbert. "Where does the puppy Morden lodge?"

Sam named the street and number.

"Then do you run Tom," said Sir Gilbert, turning to another servant; "and if he has not left his lodgings, order the people that keep the house, in my name, not to let him out: and you shall have the reward when you come back, instead of this go-between."

"I give you warning, Sir Gilbert," said Sam, contemptuously, and walked coolly off.

"Stop

"Stop that rascal!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert; his passion again rising beyond his government; "he is amenable by law for a vagabond go-between; and I'll have him hanged."

"Pray Sir Gilbert," said Lady Paragon, interposing; "let me beseech you to moderate your feelings, and prove yourself the man of sense I always believed you to be; don't expose yourself to creatures of this low description: stop your messenger to the lodgings of the man you suppose to be her paramour: Mrs. Coke says your undutiful daughter has left the house five hours; she is doubtless two stages advanced on the north road by this time; you will only make yourself the general topic of discourse, by this exposure of your disappointment to the world. Sir Bauble is my son; but if she can prefer another to him, his mother must be vain enough to say, she is undeserving his good qualities."

"Where is your son, my Lady?—I want him to be flying after them in a chaise and all the horses money can harness to it."

"I have sent to both the theatres in quest of him, and think it can't be many minutes before he arrives."

"Tom, go for a chaise and—— how many horses shall I say, my Lady?"

"Four; and two horses for servants," she answered.

"No; it shall be six," answered the Baronet; "we must make a strong push, or it will never do; order a chaise and six, and four saddle-horses, here this instant—go."

Ton ran to obey the orders.

"But pardon me, Sir Gilbert; you are doing nothing, if you don't send to provide relays upon the road."

"True again, my Lady:—run some of you after Tom to Jem Whip's stables; tell him to send out people to hire up all the horses, every horse, every single horse, on the road between here and Gretna-green: I'll be answerable for the expense, if it's a million. The bank is shut now; but if he doubts
me

me, he shall have a draught this very night on Drummond for a thousand guineas, to be paid on Monday morning."

The intervening moments till the return of the servants with the chaise and six, and four saddle-horses, were passed by Sir Gilbert in traversing the hall, and by Lady Paragon, who was seated at the foot of the stairs, in the alternate use of her salts and her fan.

"Here is the chaise!" said Lady Paragon on its arrival.

"Yes, it is come," replied the Baronet, stopping, and fixing his eyes on Lady Paragon.

"I entreat you'll wrap yourself up warm; the air is extremely cold," returned the Lady.

"Who? me, my Lady?—Why, you don't suppose I am going to risk catching a cold, that might settle the gout in my stomach, and take me off in a whiff? you can't think it would be prudent?"

"Beyond a doubt it would not," she eagerly replied; "if such are your apprehensions, I must venture to declare that I positively can't consent to let you go; we have lost Miss Oxmondeley for ever"—she emphasised the words, "by her undutifulness. I cannot so readily give up her amiable father."

The motive by which Lady Paragon was actuated in what she said, cannot want explanation.

"You are a sensible woman, my Lady," answered the Baronet; "and know what's what. Where the devil can Blackman be?" he continued, after a momentary pause.

"You intend to make him your proxy, then?" said Lady Paragon.

"Certainly, my Lady, certainly, if he would but come. I have known Blackman man and boy, and I believe I may trust him in any business, as well as I can myself."

"I believe Mr. Blackman is a very clever man," returned her Ladyship.

At this instant Blackman fulfilled the ill complimentary proverb, and entered the hall, exclaiming,

"Gad

"Gad bless my soul!—Lord ha' mercy!—What can be the matter?—Three messages at my house in the course of half an hour!—Ran all the way as fast as my legs could bring me!—A chaise at the door!—For Heaven's sake, Sir Gilbert, explain!"

"Why, hold your tongue, and listen to me, then," cried the baronet. "Bet's eloped! gone! fled! and I'm distracted."

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!" exclaimed Lady Paragon, in chorus to Sir Gilbert's pathetic complaint.

"Blackman funk upon a chair; his eyes wandering between the countenances of Lady Paragon and Sir Gilbert. "Miss Oxmondeley eloped?—Gone off with another man?" His lips quivered, and his whole frame trembled.

"I said so," answered the Baronet; "and you must pursue them to Gretna-green, as soon as Sir Bauble arrives to go with you: there's a chaise and six for you at the door."

Fame and fortune were at stake with Blackman; and, in almost as distracted a tone as Sir Gilbert had been speaking, he called out, "Let me go this instant—too much time has been lost already. For Heaven's sake don't wait for Sir Bauble: he may not come yet; but let me set off instantly." He ran towards the door.

"Stop one instant," cried Sir Gilbert; "You are my proxy; you have my full orders and leave to tear Bet away from whomsoever she may be with, and bring her home to me. But I wish Sir Bauble was here, or had his proxy to send. Will you venture upon his expedition, my Lady?"

"Me, Sir Gilbert? such a journey would annihilate me!"

"Well, then, it must be as it is; so get in, Blackman."

Blackman obeyed orders in a second. "God speed you," said Sir Gilbert to Blackman, after he had entered the chaise.

"Drive like the devil," called out Blackman to the boys: the whips cracked; the wheels turned; and away flew the chaise and six, followed up by
Sir

Sir Gilbert's butler, coachman, footman, and groom, all on horseback.

Sir Gilbert then called for his tea, and Lady Paragon insisted on making it for him; and most palatable it proved to him; for she sweetened it with compliments as well as sugar.

During tea-time the physician summoned by Mrs. Coke arrived; on his first being announced, the Baronet began surlily to inquire, who dared to send for him without his orders; but, in compliance with the advice of Lady Paragon, he not only consented to see him, but promised to take a composing draught at going to bed.

Ten o'clock came, but no Sir Bauble arrived: Lady Paragon declared she could not bear to leave Sir Gilbert alone in his present melancholy situation; so kindly invited herself to eat a bit of supper with him.

Midnight arrived without Sir Bauble; and Lady Paragon began to conjure up a multitude of misfortunes, which she by turns feared might have befallen her son. Sir Gilbert had too much need of consolation himself to be able to offer any to her Ladyship; who, unable any longer to bear the agony of suspense relative to her dear child's fate, returned home to send her own servants in search of him.

The Baronet shortly after swallowed his draught, and retired to bed; a sound sleep, the consequence of his medicine, followed; and the perturbed state of his mind encouraging dreams, he was fancying himself arrived at Gretna-green, and denouncing the vengeance of the law against the clerical Vulcan, for uniting the daughter of a Baronet with a plebeian, when a loud and repeated knock at the door of his mansion dispelled the vision, by awaking him.

He sat up some moments in his bed, unable to define what noise had disturbed him; when the knock was repeated; and in a few minutes' time Mrs. Coke, who had also heard the knocking, came to Sir Gilbert's chamber to inquire whether he chose her to answer it, as there was no man in the house besides himself. "Stop a minute, stop a minute,

Coke;

Coke ; let me consider :---I'll slip on my gown, and go to the window, and ask who it is. No, stay, perhaps I may catch cold with having taken this stuff to-night, and get my death by it ; so do you open the closet window, and ask what they want."

As this sentence was concluded, the knocking was repeated.

Mrs. Coke entered the closet ; and having thrown up the sash, inquired, " Who was there."

" Here, make haste and come down," said a man, who by his dress, and the lantern he held in his hand, appeared to be a watchman ; " or you'll have your master die in the street."

" My master !" replied Mrs. Coke ; " my master is at home and in bed."

" What's the matter ?---What do they say ?"---asked Sir Gilbert, who had by this time wrapped himself in his night-gown and advanced to the closet door.

Mrs. Coke repeated the words of the watchman.

" Oh, it is a trick.---Thieves !---A trick !---Shut the window !" exclaimed the baronet.

Mrs. Coke obeyed ; and the knocking was recommenced with increased violence. A female servant, in another part of the house, now threw up the window in her apartment ; and the watchman called out to her, " Sir Gilbert will die here in the street, if you don't make haste !"

" He bleeds like a pig !" said another voice.

" He's as cold as ice," added the first. D---n it, will you come down ?"

Sir Gilbert, who had heard this, forgot his fear of catching cold ; and throwing up the closet window, called out, " Sir Gilbert ! why here I am, sound and well. What do you mean ?---I am Sir Gilbert. Who are you ?"

" Vatchmen," they both exclaimed. " Ve found this here man half dead and speechless in the street ; and so ve searched his pockets, and there ve found nothing in 'em but a card, with Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley, No. 10, ——— square, upon it ; so instead of taking him to the vatch-house, vy ve brings him here,

here, hoping as how it might be your honour, and you'd revard our trouble."

"I'm much obliged to you for your kindness," returned the baronet; "but it ain't me; and so you may go and try somewhere else."

"D—n the bleeding rascal!" cried one of the watchmen; "let us make haste with him to the watch-house, or he'll be dying, and getting us charged with murder, mayhap."

They then took up between them the dying man, who was wrapped in a watchman's coat, and were going to proceed with him to the watch-house; when, as Sir Gilbert was pulling down the sash, one of them called out, "Holla! your honour, Sir Gilbert; stop a minute, your honour—Holla!"

"Rot the fellows!" said Sir Gilbert, "what do they want now?—but I must answer them, for peace and quiet's sake; or I suppose I shall have another tune played with my knocker." Again he raised the window:—"Well, what now?" he asked.

"Vy, the gem'man speaks to your honour."

"Well, what does he say?"

"He calls your honour Sir Gilbert."

"What's that to me?"

"Sir Gilbert," uttered a faint voice.

"Here am I," answered the baronet.

"I am Sir Bauble," replied the voice.

"Lord deliver me! What's the meaning of all this?" cried Sir Gilbert. "Sir Bauble Paragon dying in the street, in the middle of the night! Follow me! Make haste!" And he ran down into the hall, accompanied by Mrs. Coke and two female servants, who joined him in the passage.

The door being opened, Sir Bauble was conveyed by the watchmen into a parlour; and on the great coat, which had been wrapped round him, being taken off, he appeared without any covering save his shirt; his waistcoat, which hung upon him unbuttoned; and a pocket-handkerchief tied round his head in lieu of a night-cap; his face and right hand were covered with blood.

"Here's

"Here's a spot of work!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert.
"Where did you find him?"

"In Great Queen Anne-street, an' please your honour, lying as flat as a flounder on the pavement."

"All alone?"

"Oh, yes, your honour."

"He has been robbed," returned Sir Gilbert, "stripped, and almost murdered!—What a shame it is that a baronet can't pass quietly along the streets!—I say, my lads, go one of you to my lady Paragon's, at No. 5, in G—— Square, and tell her, with my compliments, that her son is safe at my house, and she need not be under any farther apprehensions about him to-night; and call you in the morning, and I'll reward you for your trouble."

"Thank your honour's vorthiness." The watchmen departed, and the door was locked upon them.

On perceiving Sir Bauble's uncovered state, all the females, except Mrs. Coke who was too old to be scrupulous, had run away; so the task of conveying him to bed was left to Sir Gilbert and Mrs. Coke. With some difficulty they lodged him in Rachel's bed: he was unable to speak, and Mrs. Coke washed the blood from his face, in order to ascertain whether it had proceeded from any wound, or from his nose. She found the latter to have been the source. The back of his right hand was cut across in two places, and Mrs. Coke, who had a smattering in surgery, dressed and bound them up.

Mean while, Sir Gilbert did not cease to interrogate him, "how he found himself; whether he grew better, and whether he was very bad?"

After some time Sir Bauble became able to speak, and Sir Gilbert then inquired "whether he had been robbed?"—"Oh, yes," in answer, satisfied Sir Gilbert for that night, and he again retired to bed, leaving Mrs. Coke, who assured him Sir Bauble was in no danger, to watch over him, and advising him to go to sleep and compose himself.

Sir Bauble had been robbed, it was true; but the robbery had not been of the nature Sir Gilbert imagined

gined it.—Heated by his intercourse with Rachel the preceding evening in the prison, our young baronet, on being dismissed from her presence by John Morden, wrote the note which we have already mentioned Rachel to have received from him, and then proceeded to the opera in search of some kinder fair, who might damp the flame he felt to be ungovernable.

A Cyprian of beauty, and more art than Sir Bauble possessed wit, soon presented herself to his notice; and at the conclusion of the opera, they retired to her lodgings; a supper and wine gave additional fire to the baronet, and charms to the fair; and they went to bed, apparently the happiest couple in nature. Sir Bauble was just sinking into sleep, when his loving goddess hastily pulling him by the arm, conjured him, as he valued his life, to fly immediately, for she heard a private door belonging to her house opening: it could be no one entering but an Irish captain who kept her at that time; for he alone had a key of it, and she was sure he would kill them both if he caught them together.

The credulous Sir Bauble sprang up and slipped on his waistcoat in a trice. The tender fair conjured him to fly that instant, for she heard the captain's step. Sir Bauble snatched up a candle that had been left burning on the table, and in a couple of seconds reached the outward door; which having unlocked, he opened, and issuing out into the street, almost insensible with fright, darted his head against the iron palisadoes which encircled the area of the next house, and lay stunned by the blow till found by the watchmen, who, on searching his pockets, and finding in one of them Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley's card, imagining him to be the baronet himself, followed the plan they have already been said to have taken, not from a motive of humanity, but, as they themselves candidly confessed, from the hope of reward.

Sir Bauble had handsomely recompensed the daughter of Venus with five guineas in barter for her love; but the fair lady being also a votary of Plutus,

Plutus, had perceived with a longing eye, that her stipend was but a very slender share of the contents of the baronet's purse. His mother-of-pearl snuff-box studded with diamonds, his enamelled tooth-pick-case, his gold repeater, and handsome buckles, also raised her admiration and longing; and her desires of possessing what she saw being raised to an equal pitch with the baronet's passions, she invented the deceit just described for pleasing herself in return for gratifying him.

CHAP. XIII.

An Equivalent.

ON the following morning, at an early hour, arrived lady Paragon, terrified almost into annihilation, as she expressed herself, for the fate of her son.—Sir Bauble immediately requested to see her; and Sir Gilbert, who had risen on hearing Lady Paragon was come, attended her to his chamber. After the first greetings of affection between the tender mother and amiable son, Sir Bauble informed them, that he had been knocked down and robbed by two men in his return from the opera; and Sir Gilbert having requested and received from him a circumstantial account of their persons and stature, he drew out an advertisement, stating what had happened, and offering a hundred pounds reward for the apprehension of the offenders, which he sent to be inserted in several of the daily prints.

Lady Paragon having judged it right that her son should be seen by a physician; the one who had the preceding evening attended Sir Gilbert was summoned to him, and he pronounced Sir Bauble to have suffered very much by his exposure to the night air, almost in a state of nature; he had, he said, much fever then upon him, and more was to be expected, as the natural consequence of what he had undergone.

Left

Left alone with her son, Lady Paragon communicated to him the elopement of Miss Oxmondeley, and consoled him, by adding, that if she did not return unmarried, she flattered herself she could prevent her ever returning to her father's favour, as she conceived that it would be no difficult matter for her to win Sir Gilbert into a marriage with herself; in which case she promised to be the friend to him, he had before pledged himself to become to her.

Noon verified the physician's words: cold and hot fits alternately seized Sir Bauble, and in the latter his fever was extremely violent.

Five o'clock in the afternoon brought back Blackman in his chaise and six, the emblem of despair.—Sir Gilbert flew down stairs to meet him, and Blackman gave him the unsatisfactory information, that, on his arrival at Barnet, the landlord had solemnly sworn that no persons answering to the description of Miss Oxmondeley and John Morden had passed that way, and had readily granted him horses to pursue his journey; that, about the middle of the second stage, the chaise had broken down, and his ankle had been strained in the fall, which had prevented his mounting one of the servants' horses and proceeding on horseback; that nearly three hours had been lost in procuring another chaise; and that, when he had arrived at St. Alban's, solemn assurances had been given him that those he was in pursuit of had not taken that road; thus, he had judged it useless to proceed, and had accordingly returned home.

Sir Gilbert had, in his turn, his tale of woe to relate relative to Sir Bauble's accident and illness; and Blackman then hobbled up stairs, as well as his lame ankle would permit him, into the chamber of the invalid.

When the tea hour was arrived, and Lady Paragon was summoned down to the parlour, Blackman requested to be the companion of Sir Bauble in her absence; and this tête-à-tête informed him in confidence of the real adventures of the preceding night.

On Lady Paragon's returning to her son's apartment,

ment, Blackman began to throw out hints, not quite in so polite a strain as he usually spoke, "that it was very hard upon an honest pains-taking man, who had his way to make in the world, to have put his character, which had never before been stained with a single blemish, into the power of others for a conditional reward;—he could not live upon promises; it little mattered to a man what he had owing him, if he died of want before it was paid."

"Good, dear Mr. Blackman, have but a little patience," cried Lady Paragon. "I know, I feel, this event to be most cruelly disappointing to us all; but I am not quite without hope of still being the friend to you I promised myself to be."

"Her ladyship was a very excellently intentioned woman," Mr. Blackman did not doubt, he answered; "but there were so many risks in his profession! so many shadows to one substance! Heigh ho!—misfortunes never come alone to him," and he cast a glance at his ankle. "Doctors' bills had not need to come in the way where there are children's mouths to fill," he added.

"Don't let these trifles distress you, Mr. Blackman; while I have the means to prevent it, they never shall: my card purse pays your surgeon's bill," Lady Paragon then drew a purse from her pocket, which contained some five-pound notes and two rouleaus, and put it into Blackman's hand.

"Heaven would reward generosity like her ladyship's," Blackman returned. "So disinterested!—given to a man who only wished to return a requital for her favours, without possessing the ability."

"You deceive yourself in thinking so," she interrupted.

"If he knew how he could serve her, she need but speak. He hoped she was convinced of that," said Blackman.

"With gratitude she remembered what he had already done for her," Lady Paragon answered. "It was now," she continued, "beyond a doubt, that Sir Bauble would never be the husband of Miss Oxmondeley;

mondeley ; and yet, she hoped," she said, " to be enabled to discharge both the conditional bonds into which Sir Bauble had entered with him."

This was intelligence so very unlooked for, that Blackman could only answer by fixing his eyes in silent astonishment upon hers.

She continued—" Destroy the two bonds which are now become void, and I will sign two others to their amount."

Still Blackman was silent.

" Unite your endeavours to mine, to persuade Sir Gilbert, in his present anger against his daughter, to marry again, and disinherit her. I cannot explain my meaning any farther ; you must guess how such a step would enable me to fulfil my son's engagement honourably to you, for your great trouble and friendship towards us." She opened her fan and held it before her face.

Blackman was himself again. " He happened," he said, " to have a bit of paper in his pocket which would exactly do for the purpose ; and an ink-stand fortunately presented itself on the table. " I promise to pay Noah Blackman five thousand pounds on the day of my marriage with Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley, and an equal sum on the day of his death" was scrawled out by the lawyer in half a minute, and in less time acknowledged and signed by her ladyship, and witnessed by Sir Bauble.

The bond was scarcely lodged in Blackman's pocket-book, when Sir Gilbert entered. " So !" he exclaimed, " Madam, Bet is not gone empty-handed ; she has taken the diamonds with her !—Another fine hobble I am brought into ! How am I to prove upon that girl Rachel's trial, that she ever had the diamonds, as they are gone from myself ?—I shall look like a fool in court after all the fuss I have made."

" Oh !" cried Blackman, " the trial must be postponed, on default of the principal witness."

" Ay, that may do for a sessions or two," replied the baronet ; " but it can't go on for ever ; and what then ?"

" I have

"I have interest in the courts, I flatter myself," said Blackman, in a tone that composed Sir Gilbert.

After a pause, Sir Gilbert asked, whether Rachel's trunks being found privately packed up, would not be sufficient evidence against her.

"Did you search them through?" said Blackman, eagerly.

"No, I did not," answered the baronet, catching Blackman's meaning; "and though I miss nothing more, it is no reason why she may not have got something I don't think of just at present."

The trunks were standing in the room as they had been left the preceding day; and Blackman and Sir Gilbert directly began to examine their contents. In the first, they found nothings but what they knew to be her own property, and some bank-notes, which Sir Gilbert owned had never been his. On opening the second, the first object which presented itself to their view was a letter directed to Sir Gilbert Oxmondeley. "Gracious me!" cried Blackman, "has the little slut been wicked enough to intercept your letters?" Sir Gilbert took it in his hand, and advanced with it to the candles. "It is her own handwriting," he said. "What can it mean?"

"And sealed!" said Blackman.

Sir Gilbert opened it, and read as follows:—

"SIR,

"When you receive this, I shall be on my journey towards Hildden.—In leaving your house without apprising you of my intended departure, I have been actuated not by the shame of any action I have ever committed in it, but from the fear of your anger falling upon me more heavily than I could bear, in a point wherein I have truly had no concern. You will not want to be told that I mean the elopement of your daughter; but I consider it a duty I owe myself, not less than you, to clear two questions which you might with justness advance to me.—Did I know your daughter's intention? and, why did I not inform you of what was in agitation? To the first, I candidly answer, I did; and that, my

OWN

own feelings reprobating a clandestine marriage, I used every argument in my power to dissuade her from the rash step, but in vain. To the second, I reply,—was I authorised to interrupt what she considered as the constitution of her happiness, and doom her to certain infelicity? You here doubtless stop, and ask how I dare venture to assert this bold declaration? Because, Sir Gilbert, I am convinced, that the man whom you have chosen for your daughter's future partner through life is wholly unworthy of her hand. Yet, Sir, believe me, on my faith, the slightest hint, that I possessed this knowledge, never escaped my lips to her, nor ever should have done, lest it should have added a pang, which it might possibly else not have experienced, to a heart already rendered desperate. But on the same asseveration, Sir, believe me, I know Sir Bauble, from certain proof, to be a worthless libertine, undeserving her regard. Ask him, Sir Gilbert, if you think proper so to do, whether he can give the lie to truth, and contradict the following assertions—That he made me a solemn declaration of his love, at the masquerade of the viscountess of Domino—That he appeared at the theatre on the following evening, in a situation which defies the tongue of delicacy, with a woman of light reputation; and that last night, during the ball at his own house, he repeated to me his declaration of love; thanked me for having secreted his passion for me from Miss Oxmondeley, and mixed with his conversation many terms which I need not repeat to give you the idea of their import. This account, Sir, I leave you, as the exculpation of what may before have appeared blameable in my conduct. Let me entreat you, Sir, to forget that your daughter has been faulty; and she will, I am sure, requite your goodness. Consider how hard it is to be obedient in a point so intimately connected with the heart, when all our feelings are repellent, and when we have never known contradiction in points so much less material to our happiness. Custom is”—

“ A second

"A second nature," interrupted Blackman, with a laugh. "Poor thing! I pity her sincerely," he continued: "I never thought this of her."

"What?" cried the baronet.

"She must be insane," answered Blackman: "This accounts for the diamonds; you see the letter is all in a strain of derangement; love for Sir Bauble has done it all. I have seen her throw glances at him, which I always thought were given with a suspicious wildness of the eye."

Sir Gilbert stood half convinced and half incredulous.

"It is droll enough, egad!" cried Sir Bauble, taking his cue from Blackman, "that the poor girl should have been so smitten with me. I thought a squeeze she gave my hand in dancing mighty odd; but supposed she did it to save herself from stumbling.—Dying of envy is *la pauvre folle*."

"Why, I think," said Sir Gilbert, speaking in the tone of a man upon whom a sudden conviction of truth has burst, "we need not read much farther to find out all this to be falsehood. When she says you made love to her at the masquerade, she's a little out in her memory there; she has forgot that Sir Bauble arrived only late that night in London."

"Oh clear, quite clear," said Blackman. "You see, her stealing the diamonds from Miss Oxmondeley, when she had plenty of cash by her, confirms positively her derangement. Poor thing! we must get her removed from prison directly; it is but a justice due to her infirmity."

"For Heaven's sake! don't bring her here," called out Lady Paragon; "it is impossible to move Sir Bauble, in his present situation; and I would not have her under the same roof with him, after these symptoms of love and madness, for ten thousand worlds."

"I promise you she sha'n't come into my house, my lady," exclaimed Sir Gilbert; "mad cats scratch,

scratch ; and I don't want to be clapper-clawed myself."

" Oh, Sir Gilbert," said Blackman, " no thought of the kind ; she must be taken care of : I'll speak immediately to a friend of mine about her ; and if he has a vacancy in his private madhouse, the sooner she is taken there, the more for her benefit.—I would step now, hut my ankle——"

" I'll send to call you a chair," said Sir Gilbert, and left the room,

" Mr. Blackman," said Lady Paragon, " I'll take it first a few minutes, if you give me leave ; I want to step home for a short time to give some orders. Sir Gilbert has been so kind as to consent to sleep at my house, that I may pass the night here. It would not be consistent with decorum for us to be in the same house, you know, all night ; and I can't quit my son in his present situation."

Blackman was in no hurry ; begged her ladyship would use the chair as suited her convenience ; and regretted his ankle would not permit his handing her to it. It was shortly after announced, and she obeyed the summons.

" Well, Sir Bauble," cried Blackman, on being left alone with the young baronet, " have not I managed matters shrewdly ? Wo'n't this do to a T ? —We are free from the trial, and all fears of discovery ; and what is best of all——"

" It does not signify how we proceed, now you have once made them believe she is mad," interrupted Sir Bauble : " tale-telling wo'n't get credit : —it was a devilish good thought of yours ! —*Ventre bleu !* what a letter the *ange* writes !"

" Doctor Spasm is a very intimate friend of mine," said Blackman ; " we have often had concerns together." A significant wink accompanied this sentence.

" Pay him well," said Sir Bauble.

" We must," answered Blackman, " or there is nothing to be done ; his prices are always high." Another wink of significance.

"You must lend me the money," said Sir Bauble.

"I have none myself;—I have a friend that has a hundred and fifty pounds; I could get it, I believe, for sixty per cent; he would have seventy of any body else."

"Nothing can be done without it."

"Nothing," returned Blackman.

"Then, *pardi*, I must have it."

"I'll get it for you, and advance only fifteen per cent. for my trouble."

"*Très-bien*: that mad scheme is a most admirable thought!"

A little bit of a memorandum, as Mr. Blackman called it, was signed by Sir Bauble; the chair returned; and the lawyer set out to visit Doctor Spasm, his brother in practice, though not in profession.

CHAP. XIV.

The Heroine in a new Situation.

THE greater part of Sunday Rachel passed in her apartment, with busy thought alone to amuse her hours.

On the Monday morning Mr. Blackman entered her chamber, accompanied by Doctor Spasm.

The Doctor was a Welchman, about five feet and an inch high: his countenance was one of those which would never have been recollected at second sight, but that nature had marked it with a large wen, which issued from his left cheek; he wore a long-tailed wig, a hat which rose into an upright corner behind, and in front hung flat over his eyes: his coat, waistcoat, and breeches, were of a dirty cherry colour; and over these he wore a loose roquelaure, with the sleeves pendent behind: in one hand he carried a gold-headed cane; the other was continually employed in lifting his wig from his head, and stroaking the bald surface beneath it.

"How

"How do you do to-day?" said Blackman to Rachel, softening his shrill voice into a tone of pity.

Not less fearful of seeing Sir Bauble enter after his ambassador, than surprised at beholding the doctor whom she knew not, Rachel made a slight answer; and her eyes continued to wander between the stranger and the door of her apartment.

"Hur looks as wild as a mountain coat, see you?" said Spasm. "Kive hur your pulse, my tear," he continued, taking Rachel's hand.

"I am not ill," she said, starting from her seat.

"Hur is only mat, and very patly mat too, but hur does not know it," returned Doctor Spasm, forcibly taking her hand.

"It is always so with people deranged," said Blackman, with a look of commiseration.

"Mad! derang'd!" cried Rachel. "What new insult is this?—Am I mad, because I will not indulge the licentious will of Sir Bauble; or deranged, because I will not own myself a thief?"

"Oh! it is very clear, hur is patly in luff," said the doctor; "hur must be in luff, hur has such a moist palm in hur hand. Come, hur shall co with me, my tear, where hur shall be very pleasant and comfortable." He tried to move her towards the door.

"What new den of despair am I about to be forced to?" asked Rachel.

"Only to this gentleman's house," answered Blackman; "where, he has already told you, you will be more comfortable than you can be here."

"I guess the house alluded to too well, answered Rachel; "it is that mentioned by the vile Sir Bauble in his letter; but I will die before I will bend to his detested purposes."

"Oh no," cried the doctor; "the house is hur own, and hur is sure hur shall be mighty happy."

They then led her, o'erwhelmed by mingled sensations of terror and grief, into a hackney-coach, which was waiting for them at the prison gate.

In the coach, Blackman frankly confessed to Rachel,

whither, for her own safety, as he told her, she was about to be conveyed. Her astonishment on this confession was beyond description great; and her violent efforts to prove the opinion formed of her senses a false one, were only pretended to be construed, by the designing fiends who sat by her, into undoubted proofs of her insanity.

Arrived at the house of Doctor Spasm, she was conducted into a mean apartment, in the chimney of which a small fire was burning; and the door was instantly, on her entering, locked upon her.

For some moments she remained standing in silent horror: her agony then dissolved into tears, and she threw herself upon the uncanopied bed, which stood in one corner of the room.

The partitions which divided her apartment from those on either side were only of wood; and the first sounds which recalled her into recollection from her stupor of grief, were the shrieks of a maniac in the adjoining chamber. She shuddered, as she gathered from the conflict of voices, that Spasm was inflicting some chastisement on a wretch already too unfortunate in the loss of reason; and yet, she almost thought the fate of him she pitied preferable to her own. For the first and only time in her life, she abjured the power of sense: she wished to forget her miseries in the loss of reason: she raised herself upon the bed, and sat some moments in that state of wild despair, which almost approached to her wish. A voice in the opposite apartment caught her ear: it sang: she listened, and distinctly heard—

Alas! alas! why am I mad?

Why do I care for thee?

*For, Charley, thou dost know my fate,
And yet ne'er think'st of me.*

*With straw and rue I'll bind my hair,
And weep all day for thee.*

*I gave thee all the love I had,
Yet thou ne'er think'st of me!*

The

The words were nought; but the melody and the expression with which they were sung were so impressive of madness sensible of itself, that it conveyed an idea to the mind of Rachel horrid beyond imagination;—she fell upon her knees, and offered up a prayer in palliation of the wish that had inadvertently entered her brain in a moment of despair. “Almighty father!” she cried, “forgive what I repent, and grant me fortitude to err no more.—Oh! if the choice of ills on earth be mine, may I never be mad, and know I am so!”

She rose, and leaned against the partition which divided her from the songster; she repeated her little air, and it melted Rachel into a soft sorrow, which almost partook the nature of consolation.

A woman, of no very pleasant countenance, brought her meals for the first two days. On the evening of the second, at about the hour of ten, Doctor Spasm himself entered her apartment. The Welchman was a professed admirer of the fair sex; and having been entrusted by Blackman with the purpose for which Rachel had been brought to his house, he buoyed himself up with the hope of being able sufficiently to ingratiate himself with his fair lodger to obtain a relish of those charms of which Sir Bauble was so eager to pluck the first fruits. The doctor was married, it is true: but many a man who has venison at home, prefers dining abroad on mutton; no wonder then, that he, whose home dish was ordinary tough beef, preferred the chance of a meal abroad on tender lamb.

On his entrance into her apartment, Rachel was agreeably disappointed by not seeing Sir Bauble follow him. Every moment since her arrival at the doctor's, she had been in constant fear of beholding him, and began to wonder to what fortunate chance she was indebted for not seeing him.

The doctor locked the door, and approaching the table, he pulled from one pocket a bottle of wine, and from the other two glasses. “Hur is come, my tear, to invite hur to trink a class of wine with hur
this

this evening," he said, seating himself before the fire.—"Well, how is hur to-day?" he continued.

"Perfectly well, Sir," she answered; "believe me, I am very well; and you have been imposed on by those who have told you to the contrary, and forced me hither."

"Hur touts not: hur wishes it was so, dough; for hur is too pretty a cirl to be mat for luff. Hur must pe a shappy tevil-inteat, that would let such a pretty cirl luff her, and not luff her again.—Hur wish hur was hur."

"Indeed, Sir, I have been misrepresented to you: believe me, there is no truth in what you have been told concerning me."

The doctor turned the topic of discourse, by saying, "Hur was a very pretty cirl, and hur could not forbear coming to give hur a glass of wine when hur wife, who was patly jealous, was in ped."

The following day passed solitary to Rachel. In the evening Blackman visited her; and hur surprise was again excited by Sir Bauble not appearing with him. In vain she endeavoured to work upon the man of law by all the persuasive arguments she could invent, to release her from her present confinement, and confess that he did not believe her in a state to merit it; but he answered her only by pretending to sooth her spirits, and dispose her to bear her unhappy calamity with composure.

The same hour at which Spasm had visited her the preceding night brought him again on this. He drank his wine, as he had before done, in healths and gross compliments to Rachel; and on rising to depart, he said, "Hur hoped hur would not refuse hur a single kiss for hur entertainment and indulgence to hur."

Alarmed by the development of a conduct which Rachel had entirely misconceived—having hitherto imagined the doctor to have been only endeavouring to obtain her good opinion by a show of indulgence, as fearing her resentment should fall upon him if ever she regained her liberty—she shrieked aloud as
he

he advanced towards her with his request. "Hur shrieks signify little, cot luff her," cried the satyr; "shrieks is too common here to be minded." She was aware of the truth of this declaration: and knowing she must look for assistance only in herself, she snatched up the poker from the hearth, and jumping on a chair with it in her uplifted hand, said, "Touch me at your peril!"

"Hur is an ungrateful vixen, and a faucy tevil," he cried; "and if hur does not come this instant town and hantfomely ask parson of hur, hur shall rue this behaviour to-morrow, by St. Tafs! Will hur come town, or will hur not?" he asked passionately.

"Not to be insulted," she answered: "I have already suffered humiliation enough without stooping to you."

"Very well, very well," exclaimed the disappointed inamorato; "hur may, perhaps, wish hur had been civiler to-morrow, when hur cets on the strair jacket for this: and, by cot! hur shall have it, and the whip too; or hur wishes hur may be ramned tead!" So saying he left the apartment, his eyes glaring with rage, and locked the door upon his unhappy prisoner.

Terrified beyond her bearing at the idea of Spasm's threat, against the execution of which she knew her feeble strength could do but little, and in favour of which he would have the plea of right conduct, an impulse, almost amounting to desperation, seized her, of attempting to effect her escape, and to hazard her detection provoking her keeper to greater rage.

She resolved to let an hour pass away in silence; during which she supposed he would doubtless be not only in bed, but asleep, in consequence of the wine he had drunk, which she perceived had produced some little effect upon his senses before he had left her apartment. No sound but the sighs of the unhappy wretch confined in the adjoining apartment broke the stillness of the night. When the hour was compleated, she advanced warily to the door of her apartment, and held her candle to the lock; she

perceived

perceived that it was fastened by a key on the outside, and by a small bolt immediately below the lock. She placed a chair near the door; upon it she put the candle to give her light, and with her penknife, which she slipped through the crack of the door, she contrived, without much difficulty, to push back the bolt. Her heart beat high with joy, fear, and expectation. She next placed it in the key-hole, and moved it round, in the hope of its catching some part of the works; by pressing against which, she might force the bar of the lock back. After many attempts, something in the lock yielded to the knife, and moved round with her hand: it was the key of the door which had been left on the outside;—it fell to the floor;—its sound struck upon her heart. She returned her knife into her pocket, replaced the candle upon the table, and seated herself by the fire, trembling lest the noise should have awakened any one in the house, and dreading the event if it had. Many tedious minutes passed in silence; she crept softly to the door, and listened. She heard no sound that seemed to indicate that any one had been alarmed by the falling of the key; the sighs and hollow groans of the maniac she only heard, and she shuddered as they fell on her ear.

She again ventured to replace the light in a situation to assist her operation, and again she put her knife into the lock. The first attempt was unsuccessful. On the second, she pressed against some parts of the works which seemed to promise success; she twisted her hand forcibly round, and in the action her knife broke off at the handle.

With the loss of her instrument vanished hope. She had no scissors in her pocket. There was no single thing in her apartment which could supply the place of her knife, and she seated herself on the bed in despair and tears. No prospect was now before her but the discovery of the attempt she had made, and the close confinement that would follow it to prevent her making a second. Thought paused a moment. It returned with this conviction, that, as
her

Her intention must unavoidably be known, she not being able to replace the key in the lock, or to redraw the bolt into the situation from which she had moved it, a greater hazard could not place her in greater fear of punishment than she already stood. Accordingly she determined to force the door; she took up the poker, which was the only instrument her prison afforded her, and was on the point of applying it to break the lock, when an invention of less danger presented itself to her imagination—to heat the poker, and, by burning an incision round the lock, enable herself to open the door without noise. Her heart bounded with the happy thought, and she immediately put the poker into the fire, on which she heaped some fresh coals.

Whilst she stood before the fire watching the instrument as it heated, an idea presented itself to her mind which had not before occurred to her—that, from what she had heard relative to the treatment of maniacs, her keeper must have been convinced that she was not deranged, by permitting her the use of fire and candle, and not divesting her of her knife; which indulgences she had understood were never permitted to persons under the kind of confinement she was then in; and these favours, with the offer of his wine and the intrusion of his society, she supposed were the indulgences for which her keeper had asked the reward that had rendered her thus desperate.

Presently the poker was become sufficiently hot for her purpose; she applied it with success to the door, and by dexterously moving it along she prevented the wood from being fired more than was necessary for her purpose.—After several times heating her tool, and as often applying it to the door, she saw her object obtained; the lock was burnt away from the door, and it opened with ease as she drew it back into the apartment.

On tip-toes, with her shoes in one hand and her candle in the other, she issued forth into the passage; she listened; all was still. She descended a flight

of stairs, which she well recollected she had mounted when conducted by Spasm to her apartment. She proceeded as swiftly as she durst venture to move along into another passage, which also terminated in a flight of stairs; and at the bottom of these, she plainly perceived by holding out her candle as she stood at the top, was the door into the street. She immediately descended, and placing her candle on the floor, began to open the door by taking off from it a chain which crossed from its centre to one of the jambs. She next ventured to turn the lock; which, though rusty and large, moved to her hand with little noise. There were still two bolts, one at the top and the other at the bottom of the door, to be undrawn; she first attempted that at the bottom; she undrew it with difficulty, and it creaked alarmingly; this was, however, no time for delay or listening; she put on her shoes, and her hand was laid upon the upper bolt, when a step, and a violent knock against the outside of the door, thrilled her heart.—Some one within would undoubtedly come to answer the knock, and she must be discovered.—In an instant the step receded, and “past 3 o’clock,” in a watchman’s tone, succeeding its departure, she could hardly forbear smiling at her own unnecessary fear and want of recollection.—She undrew the upper bolt, opened the door, and ran forward a considerable way into the street without turning round her head or stopping to recollect whither she was going.

CHAP. XV.

A Rescue.

THE night was dark, and the light of the lamps almost obscured by a thick misty rain which was falling.

In a state of fear, approaching to phrensy, Rachel proceeded

proceeded sometimes in straight lines, and sometimes turning the corners of the streets, as the continuation of the flat pavement directed her. She had passed several of the guardians of the night unmolested, except by words, until one of them called to her to stop, and, on her still proceeding forward, began to pursue her. She was on the point of crossing a street to escape him, when the intervention of a carriage obliged her to stop, and gave him an opportunity of coming up with her. He seized her by the arm, and called her for a young bitch that deserved hanging, and was dragging her along, when the carriage stopped close by where they stood. Rachel shrieked, and called for help: a footman had meanwhile descended from behind the coach and knocked at the door. Again Rachel shrieked and clung by one arm to the palisades round the area of the house at which the footman had knocked, to prevent the watchman from dragging her away. A lady put her head from the carriage, and inquired what was the matter? "Nothing but a young squalling w——e, my lady," answered the Cerberus of the morning. "Oh! my lady," cried Rachel, catching the watchman's word, "indeed, indeed, I am not what he says: I am a defenceless miserable wretch: but, by heaven! I am not what he says: I am not bad, indeed: for pity's sake, afford me your assistance!"—"Give the watchman a guinea," said the lady to her servant, "and desire him to let her go." The servant obeyed her orders. "Why, to be sure, if your ladyship desires it, I can have no objection to the guinea; good night, my lady, and thank you, my lady," and away he stalked, bawling out, almost four o'clock."

"Heaven reward you, Madam!" said Rachel, "I cannot." She burst into tears.

The door at that moment opened, and the light held within it by a female servant falling on Rachel's face, showed to the lady, who was alighting from the carriage, no common contour of features, and she stopped, and fixed her eyes on Rachel's countenance.

"Oh

"Oh Madam!" cried Rachel, moved again to address her by the attention with which she looked upon her, "you have been kind to me once: for mercy's sake, do not desert me to new calamities!—I am not the wretch I seem in principle, though too truly so in suffering.—Let me entreat you to afford me your protection this one night.—I am myself defenceless and miserable; but I have friends able to requite your goodness, and who would joy to do it."

"Your countenance," said the lady, "interests me in your favour, and your situation pleads to the heart. Come in with me; I will know more of you."

Rachel followed her into a neat house. They ascended into an apartment elegantly furnished; from which a door opened into a bed-room. The lady placed herself by the fire, and invited Rachel to sit by her. Her dress was such as showed her to be returned from a masquerade; her figure was tall and elegant; she appeared to be about forty, and her face was strikingly handsome, though evidently indebted for its charms to art.

"Has any body called to-night, Betty?" she said to her maid as she seated herself.

"Nobody, but Sir Flat Fire, Ma'am," answered the maid; "and as he heard you were at the masquerade, he said he would breakfast with you."

"Set the things ready in my chamber, then, to-night," replied the lady, "and deny me to any body else who may call."

The maid left the room.

"Now," said the lady, drawing her chair nearer to Rachel's, "speak freely if you are one of those unhappy victims doomed to be the slaves of man;—candidly confess it, nor fear my censure."

"Truly, Madam, I am not," answered Rachel.

"Enough," replied the lady, "I believe you; but the credit you obtain from me in this point robs you of no small portion of my pity. The greatest state of misery deserves the greatest share of commiseration;

miseration ; and experience has taught me how to pity those victims of delusion."

"Madam !" ejaculated Rachel.

"Yes," she replied. "Despise me not for the frankness of my confession. I am not unprincipled, though I have been unthinking ; and confide in my services, for I have known distress too poignantly myself to refuse alleviation of her sorrows to another."

Rachel was at a loss what to think or what to say ; there was so great a contradiction in the words and avowed life of this woman, that she knew not whether to believe what she said the effect of her feelings, or a lure to betray her into criminality.

"Why thus silent ?" she demanded of Rachel, after a momentary pause. "Do I merit this reserve after having rescued you from danger and invited you into my house, though an utter stranger to me ?—Have not I given your confidence a challenge which merits your acceptance ?—Who are you ?—By what means were you in the situation I found you ?"

"Oh Madam !" replied Rachel, scarcely able to forbear bursting into tears at the recollection of her recent situation, "I have escaped this night from unjust confinement in a private madhouse."

"Whither were you going when annoyed by the watchman ?"

"I know not whither," said Rachel : the tears would no longer be restrained ; and they impeded her utterance.

Miss Darlington, for so was the mistress of the house named, poured out for Rachel a glass of wine from a decanter which was standing on the table, and persuaded her to drink it. Seeing her a little recovered, she said to her, "Have you, then, no friends in London ?"

Rachel hesitated to answer ; then, after a short pause, said, "Oh Madam ! after what you have told me, you will not surely desert me, if I lay open to you a brief account of the situation in which I stand ;

stand: I know not how else to gain your belief in my honour, or to expect your assistance in releasing me from the calamities that surround me: I am also, though perhaps in a less degree than yourself, the victim of licentious man."

"Where is there misery in a female form," exclaimed Miss Darlington, "that those designed by nature to protect us have not made so?—Tell me your misfortunes, I entreat you; I feel a never-failing impulse within my heart, that commands me to relieve a woman's sufferings, in slender expiation of my own transgressions."

Again the character and language of this woman, so opposite in nature, raised the wonder of Rachel; but her words were nevertheless spoken with a feeling that left her no room to doubt that they were the words of truth; and she informed her, "that she resided in the country, in the house of a clergyman; that a distant relation of his, a baronet, had invited her to pass the winter with his daughter in London; that his daughter's intended husband, also a baronet, had been smitten with her, and vainly attempted to procure her for his mistress; and that she had been carried to prison on a false accusation of theft, and thence to the madhouse, she supposed by his instigation, in the hope of ultimately forwarding his view upon her."

"The pangs of woman are man's elysium!" exclaimed Miss Darlington, as Rachel concluded her brief narrative. "By man I have been driven an outcast from society; by man I have been debarred the name of wife, the ecstasy of motherly affection!—Man, by his own example, teaches us to sin, and then despises us that we have followed it: but this is nought to you—What can I do to serve you?"

"I wrote to my friends," replied Rachel, "while in prison; but having received no answer from them, I imagine that my letter was intercepted or miscarried. The London mail passes every day through the village of Hilden, where they reside. I should

owe you my eternal gratitude for seeing me safely placed in it."

"It leaves London at eight o'clock in the evening," answered Miss Darlington; "we have the day before us, and depend on my protection."

"Not till night!" said Rachel anxiously.

"Do you regret that you have a few hours to pass with me?" returned Miss Darlington.

"Oh no, indeed I do not," replied Rachel, in the fulness of her grateful heart; "but I fear to meet those who will visit you, ere I can depart."

"Who?"

"Sir Flat Fire, your maid said, would breakfast with you."

"Wretch!" cried Miss Darlington; "to him too must I bend, to keep myself an uncertain period from beggary!—Is it he who has been your enemy?"

"Oh no," said Rachel; "but he knows both me and those who once were my friends; and, should he see me here, and give information of my retreat to them, all your kind intentions towards me might be frustrated."

"Depend upon it, then, he shall not; he will not be here before eleven o'clock, and you shall be secreted against his arrival in a private apartment, where a bed shall be provided for you. I would invite you now to go to rest; but I feel an interest in your fate, a wish to enjoy your society and to solace your sorrows, which I cannot account for, unless it be, that, while I sooth your misfortunes, I calm the anguish in my own breast."

Rachel was silent.

"When you return home," continued Miss Darlington, "you will never dare to avow to whom you owe your rescue: the prejudice of the world forbids the mention, much more the acknowledgement, of any good derived from one like me. Oh! how uncharitable is that sentiment in men, that will not account an action received at an evil hand a good one!"

"Think

"Think not all men so," said Rachel; "I have friends with minds above the customs of the world."

"Would they pity me?" she asked.

"They would endeavour to reclaim you," Rachel answered.

"'Tis done," she cried; "conviction of error has already brought repentance."

"Is that repentance perfect, which does not abjure its delusion?" asked Rachel.

"Can I die of want?" cried Miss Darlington. She rose, and traversed the room; a couple of turns drove the phantom of misery from her brain, and she resumed her seat.

How sincerely did the feeling heart of Rachel pity one thus lost to society, with a heart repentant of its error, and yet without the means to fly from sin.

"Can the libertine refuse to succour her in repentance, whom he has possessed in error?" said Rachel.

"Repentance," replied Miss Darlington, "requires courage much beyond the first plunge into sin. Those men, whom alone unfortunates like myself are suffered to know, fear to hear its name: it brings with it stings too goading even for their little share of sensibility: continued delusion is a more flattering friend, and they hug it to their hearts to ward off its dreaded opponent. What then can women, subject to such dissolutes, perform, whatever they may wish to do? Solitude in the world is to any one worse to bear, than seclusion from it in a desert; what, then, must it be to a cankered heart?—If we fly from the bad, we may not approach the good; we must bear with solitude; and if we even persuade ourselves to its toleration, how are we to support that solitude?—Hand round a subscription-list to the men of the world; make its request a small gratuity, intended to be covered to the future honest maintenance of a woman they had all known immersed in dissoluteness; which of them would not say—'He made it a constant rule never to subscribe to things of the kind?' and which would not give his last guinea to seduce an innocent girl?"

Rachel

Rachel listened, but knew not what to answer.

Miss Darlington continued—"I have however amassed a small property, with which I have determined, in a very short time, to pass over into Flanders, and settle myself in some convent, where prayer and contrition may, I hope, wipe out the stain of my past guilt, ere I cross the gulf that divides me from eternity."

They conversed, to the apparent relief of Miss Darlington, and the mixed pleasure and wonder of Rachel, till, the light of day breaking upon them through the crevices of the shutters, Miss Darlington conducted Rachel to an apartment, in which was a comfortable bed; and having informed her how to fasten herself within her chamber, departed, promising to call her when Sir Flat Fire was gone.

Rachel immediately entered the bed; the novelty of her situation, and the joy she felt upon the happy certainty in which she imagined herself now to be placed, of soon again beholding her friends at Hilden, for some time drove off the attacks of sleep; at length it visited her; nor left her till Miss Darlington awoke her, by rapping at her chamber-door an hour after midday.

CHAP. XVI.

A Promise.

WHEN Rachel descended, a breakfast was prepared for her; and Miss Darlington informed her, that she had sent her servant to the mail-coach office in quest of a place for her that evening, but that he had found the entire coach already engaged, and had accordingly secured a place for the following night.

After dinner Miss Darlington said, "I cannot part from you—perhaps, and I fear too likely, never to meet

meet again—without giving you the outline of my past life. Can you so far comply with my wish, as to attend to events of little importance to yourself or the world at large?—I have hitherto had no one to communicate them to; and I should feel an indescribable pleasure in their narration.”

Rachel declared she should be gratified by the recital; and her hostess thus began:—

“My father was a clergyman, whose living was his all; and who, being a branch of a family of rank, was obliged to live up to the extent of what he possessed; my brother and myself were his only children. I had just attained my sixteenth year, and my brother his eighteenth, when my parent died. My mother had a brother, who held a high rank in the army; he undertook to provide for her son, and immediately received him into his house.

“My mother and myself retired to a small house in the market-town near which we had resided during my father’s life, on a slender sum, which had been her dower, and settled upon her by my father.

“In the same town lived a family, of what is usually styled fashion; I mean, who passed their winters in London, half the summer at a watering-place, and were more sought after by their creditors than their friends; they were however extremely civil to my family; and happening to be down at the time of my father’s death, they augmented their civilities towards my mother and myself. We were very frequently at their house, though unable to make them a suitable return, and always treated by them as equals.

“About two months after my father’s decease, a young baronet arrived at their house; who no sooner saw me, than he professed himself my admirer; and I confessed myself to be no less pleased with him.

“He asked my hand in marriage; I applied to my mother for a ratification of my darling wish from her lips; but she refused to give it till she had learnt by letter, whether the marriage would be consonant with the wishes of his family. I instantly applied

applied to him for his father's address; and he besought me to endeavour to prevail upon my mother to let us be privately married; saying, he knew the proud blood of his father would never be brought to consent to his union with a girl like myself, who possessed neither fortune nor rank; but that he doubted not, if the knot was once tied between us, his father would be easily brought to forgive us. My mother's spirit was too great to listen to a proposal of this kind; and my lover was forbid to see me any more, except on her terms. It was my first love; and I loved too ardently, so calmly to resign my object of adoration. I suffered him to write to me privately; and I at length permitted him to bring me to this city, where we were married by a special licence in the house he had provided for us.

"Three months passed away in happiness too transcendent to be lasting. At the expiration of this time, I read, in one of the country news-papers, the death of my unhappy mother. On the following day I received a letter from my brother, informing me, that my parent had died of a broken heart; that my uncle refused to see me on account of my clandestine marriage, and had even forbid my brother from holding any correspondence with me, on pain of losing his favour for ever.

"I had still one comfort, greater than all my calamities, the love of my husband; but, alas! I was soon doomed to be undeceived in my last and only blessing. In the course of a fortnight after this time he was one day brought home to me mortally wounded from a duel. I stood by his bed-side weeping, almost distracted at the idea of losing him; thus passed a night and a day; he insensible, I almost frantic. In the course of the next night, returning reason announced approaching death; but, alas! he possessed his intellects sufficiently long to make me eternally miserable—to tell me that I had been the dupe of a false marriage—that I was not his wife.

"I fell to the floor in a state of insensibility; nor recovered

recovered from it till the author of my misery was a corpse.

“ For nearly three months I remained in a state of despair and anguish, beyond the powers of my tongue to describe, or the strength of my reason to dwell upon now ; at the expiration of this time, necessity compelled me to write to the father of my seducer ; and explaining to him how I had been trepanned by his son into wretchedness, I implored his compassion, if not for me, at least for the infant which was my burden.

“ Without consenting to see me, I was placed, by his directions, in a decent lodging, where the common conveniences of life were provided for me, and were promised to be continued to me, if the child still unborn proved a boy.

“ At the expected time I was delivered of a male child ; but three days only were the period of its life ; upon its death ten guineas were sent me by its grandfather, with an order never again to apply to him, as I had then received from him the last gratuity he should ever bestow on me.

“ I continued for some time extremely ill ; and approaching death seemed to be my only promised comfort. I was however reserved for more and new sufferings ; and after some time, I was become well and strong. To labour I had never been accustomed ; I knew myself as ill qualified to any undertaking which might have gained me a reputable subsistence ; thus I debated on what plan to adopt, till the little all possessed was wasted in the period of consideration.

“ I pawned what few trinkets I had ; and with their barter I procured an advertisement for the place of a governess in a private family, or a teacher in a school, to be inserted for me in a daily print ; many applications were made to me ; but the want of some person to recommend me, was an irremovable obstacle to my obtaining any one of them.

“ Rendered almost desperate by the peculiar hardness of my case, I was on the point of offering myself

myself as a common servant ; when I was one morning told a gentleman wished to see me. I descended into the shop of the house in which I lodged, and found there a plain-dressed man, who inquired of me, whether I was the young woman who had advertised for the situation of a governess?—I told him I was : the natural question of ‘ where he was to apply for my recommendation ? ’ followed. I referred him to my landlady for my character : I knew no one else ; and I had bribed her to keep the secret of my child. He seemed not perfectly satisfied with the reference ; and began to ask me what knowledge I possessed for rendering me useful in my situation. I answered him the truth, and he seemed not displeased with my account ; I added, that I could not speak French. He answered me, that my ignorance of that language was in my favour, as I was required to teach English to the children of a family abroad ; and that my not knowing any other than my native tongue, would remove all fear of my suffering the children to speak in any other language. I had advertised that I had no objection to travel ; so only inquired in what part of the world the family resided. In Holland, at Amsterdam, he replied ; and that my salary would be very good, if I gave satisfaction——”

At that instant Miss Darlington’s servant opened the door, and said, that a boy was come express from the mail-coach office, with notice that one of the places had been just given up ; and that if the lady who had applied in the morning would make haste down, she might go that night.

“ You’ll stay till to-morrow ? ” said Miss Darlington, with a look of anxiety.

“ You must excuse me,” answered Rachel ; “ I cannot let slip this opportunity.”

“ Then we shall never meet again ! ” exclaimed Miss Darlington.

“ I hope we may ; indeed I do ! ” said Rachel.

“ Will you write to me ? ” asked Miss Darlington.

“ I will.”

“ Then

"Then you do not hate me for being unfortunate?"

"Oh no!—but the sequel of your story:—at least, pardon what I say—your receiving visits from Sir Flat Fire"—she hesitated.

"I know it, I know it," cried she hastily; "but I have told you my reason."

"How much would make you comfortable?—How much would take you to Flanders?"

"I have amassed a few guineas,—about forty; as many more would——"

"You shall have them then"—interrupted Rachel. "Farewell! Heaven grant you peace and pardon!"

"Stay an instant," exclaimed Miss Darlington. "Shall I really have them? and can they be spared by you, without injury to yourself?"

"They can indeed; and you shall really have them."

"Heaven, Heaven bless you!—I will never see Sir Flat again."

Rachel drew her hand from Miss Darlington's; and exclaiming, "Farewell, remember your promise," ran down stairs.

At the door appeared Sir Flat Fire himself, on the point of entering the house.—"Ah! what! my natty partner! cousin to the Ox's! how the devil came you here?" he cried. Rachel ran past him, entered the coach, which was waiting for her with the door open, and in less than a minute lost sight of him and the house.

Arrived at the office, she drew out a guinea, which, with a crown piece, she had discovered loose in her pocket; and having given it to Miss Darlington's footman, desiring him to pay the coachman, and keep the rest himself, she entered the vehicle which was to transport her once more to the scenes of her happy youth.

CHAP. XVII.

Agreeable Companions in a Stage-Coach.

IN the coach, when Rachel entered it, were already two of the passengers, both males; and their sex was all there was sufficient light for Rachel to distinguish. "Here, Miss, sit by me," cried one of them, who had probably seen her face from the reflection of the lamps, as she had stood on the outside of the door. She accepted his offer, and seated herself fronting the horses.

When she had some moments taken her seat, the same voice inquired for the fourth passenger; and on being informed that they were to stop and take up a lady, he cried, "Ay, all right and fair; then we shall go merrily on."

Presently the coach proceeded, and stopping at the appointed place, a woman of immense corpulency presented herself as the expected passenger. "If we are overturned, I hope it will be my luck to lie uppermost," said the same gentleman in an under voice to Rachel.

The fat lady mounted a couple of steps in her ascent into the vehicle; then stopping short, she exclaimed "Where am I to sit?" Nobody answered. She paused a moment, then continued—"Well, if, in the course of all my travelling, I ever saw men so ungenteel as to take place of a lady in a public coach!" Still she did not attempt to proceed.

"Pray, Madam, get in, if you please," bawled out the coachman. "I can't stop another minute."

"I ordered a front place to be taken for me," returned she; "and it is very shameful I can't have it when I bespoke it."

"That ain't my fault, Ma'am," replied the coachman: "them as gets in first has the choice of seats. If you had come down an hour ago, and got in at the office, you might have kept yourself one; but it's too late now."

"I am

"I am rightly served," exclaimed the lady, "for going by such a vulgar conveyance." She entered the coach, and having seated herself, said, "Now, young man, hand me in my dog."

"A dog in the coach, Ma'am?" said the gentleman who sat by Rachel.

"Yes, a dog in the coach," returned she; "he is not the first that has rode in it." The dog was lifted in, and the lady received him in her arms.

"Ma'am," cried the gentleman, "I don't choose to ride with it; I have a particular antipathy to dogs; it is contrary to the rules of the coach to admit animals, and he sha'n't go."

"Sir," returned the lady, "I never was contradicted in such a rude way before in my life.—You prove yourself no gentleman by your manners."

"I wish to enter into no farther discussion than what relates to the dog," replied the gentleman.

"Well, Sir, I only spoke of the dog," returned the lady, witty for the second time in her own opinion.

Meanwhile the coach was rolling rapidly forward.

"Well, Ma'am, I desire you'll keep him on your own lap for this stage," said the gentleman; "and when we change horses, I shall insist on his being fastened some where on the outside."

"Very well," returned she, "and I'll ask the coachman if it is not my right to keep him within."

The lady continued to hold the dog, which was a spaniel of no very diminutive size, against her body by its two fore legs, her corpulency preventing her from having any lap to rest it upon.

Not a syllable more escaped the lips of the party till they reached the first place for changing horses. The lady then began to apply to the coachman for him to resolve her in the right or wrong. The coachman wisely answered, "that it was nothing to him, and the gentlefolks must settle it amongst themselves."

"But the law! What's the law?" asked the lady, vehemently—"the law about dogs, I say."

"I know

"I know of none, but the tax," replied the man; "and they that can't afford to pay it must knock their dogs on the head; that is all I can tell about it."

"I wish that had been the law itself," said the gentleman in the coach.

"A fine polite set I am got amongst!" exclaimed the lady. "But it is my own fault, for submitting to a stage-coach."

The lady was, notwithstanding, victorious; her opponent maintaining a strict silence after his last speech, and the dog of course continuing to make one of the party.

At the next stage the passengers were to sup. The two gentlemen alighted; but the ladies did not choose any refreshment.

"Is that man any relation of yours, Miss?" asked the lady unknown.

"No, Ma'am," Rachel replied.

"He is an unmannerly fellow, whoever he is," she returned. "My dog is as clean as he can be, and as often washed, I dare say. Many is the good time I have him tossed into a pail full of soap-suds."

In half an hour's time those who had alighted returned, and the coach moved again forward. Presently the man who had not yet spoken, and who was an itinerant methodist preacher, began to snore, and the fat lady's dog growled him out responses. The dog's enemy seized his cane, and guiding his hand by the sound, gave him a rap, which increased the growl into a yelp.

Again the confusion of tongues ensued, till the awakened methodist meliorated them once more into apparent harmony; and the lady having slipped down her spaniel into a small space at the bottom of the coach between her feet and the door, silence and intervening fits of sleep prevailed over the party till day began to break.

By the increasing light, Rachel examined her party. The woman was, as she expected, coarse and vulgar; dressed in a mourning china habit and a black beaver hat trimmed with crape; and Rachel

could not forbear thinking that she had some slight remembrance of her face.

The methodist preacher was tall, thin, and lank; he was dressed in black, and piety sat caricatured on his countenance.

The gentleman who sat by Rachel was buttoned up in a drab great-coat; he wore a brown bob-wig and a round hat, and was nodding with his chin rested upon his hands, which were crossed over the top of his cane. Presently he awoke, and displayed no very displeasing contour of features.

About two hours after break of day they arrived at a small market-town, where they were to breakfast. It happened to be market-day: thus before the inn-door were collected cows, calves, pigs, poultry, butter, and eggs. Having entered a small room which was shown them, the methodist preacher, probably fearful that the good things of this world would find no consumption, if all those he had exhorted to condemn them followed his doctrine, unless he took pity on them himself, ordered some ham and eggs, which he washed down with tea and brandy. The lady unknown, and Rachel, drank coffee at a separate table; and the spaniel's opponent did not enter the room till it was almost time for them again to depart; having, as he said, "been taking a look into a market."

Presently the coachman summoned them away; the lady and her dog got in first; next, Rachel; her the methodist preacher followed; and lastly came the gentleman in the drab great-coat, who had no sooner resumed his seat in the coach, than, putting his head out of the door, he addressed the boy who had assisted them to mount the steps, with, "Now, young man, hand me in my pig."

"A pig in the coach, Sir!" exclaimed the lady. "Are you mad?"

"Why not, as well as a dog, ma'am?" returned the gentleman. "I have suffered your animal to ride when I could have commanded his being turned out; and I insist on the precedent for admitting mine."

mine. Give me in the pig," he continued to the boy who stood without the coach.

A black pig, half covered with dirt, was directly held up to view, and the lady exclaimed, "There's a filthy beast indeed! My dog has not a speck of dirt about him; he's too often washed, poor fellow."

"My pig shall be washed, to be a fit companion for him then," said the gentleman, and immediately got out of the coach. Having tipped the coachman half-a-crown to dispose him to wait his time, he asked the boy who held the pig to show him where there was a pump. They went into the inn-yard, and in a few minutes' time returned with the pig not a jot cleaner than before, and dripping with water. "Now, Ma'am," said the gentleman, again entering the coach, "I have washed my pig, and I insist on his riding with me."

"He shall not, Sir, I declare."

"Then, Ma'am, he shall ride in the boot with your dog."

"No, Sir," returned the lady: "I'll have a chaise to my journey's end, and sue you for the payment of it.—Boy, let me out!"—She alighted. "Coachman, who is that unmannerly fellow in the inside?"

"I don't know the gentleman, Ma'am."

"Sir, I insist upon knowing your name!"

"Then you must find means to learn it, Ma'am," returned the gentleman.

"It is not worth my while to take any trouble about it," replied the indignant lady. "Coachman, let me advise you not to take any more such ruffraff for inside passengers, or you'll ruin the credit of your coach, if it ever had any; and I can't much believe it ever had, when I meet with such company in it."

"So much the worse for my master; it is nothing to me."

"I sha'n't go another step with you."

"I hope you'll remember me then, Ma'am."

"There," said she, throwing him sixpence.—

"It is more than all you have behind you is worth;" and away she stalked into the inn.

The coachman gave her a left-side benediction for her liberality; and the gentleman having commanded his pig to be put into the boot, the coach once more set forward on its journey.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, the well-known spire of Hilden church met Rachel's gazing eye, and in a quarter of an hour's time she alighted at the Rose and Crown.

The landlord, who immediately recognised her, exclaimed, "Oh, dear Miss! I am glad you are come.—Here be sorrowful doings. I am glad you are come at last?"

"Thank you, my good friend!" said Rachel, "You know then where I was?"

"Oh yes, they knowed well enough where you was, and they wrote, and they wrote, and there comed no answer, nor you, nor nothing. Poor Miss Emily be just distracted."

"And the worthy Mr. Morden is, I doubt not," said Rachel, "quite"——

"Oh, quite as bad, as bad can be," interrupted the landlord. "But it must soon be over now."

"Good day!" returned Rachel: "a few minutes will now end his anxiety," and she then walked hastily forward to the parsonage.

CHAP. XVI.

Misfortune thickens.

SHE entered by a back-door which led her into the kitchen, where she hoped to find some one of the family who might inform Mr. Morden of her return, fearing that if she rushed into his presence unannounced, his joy at so unexpectedly seeing her, after the sad state to which the landlord of the Rose and Crown had pronounced anxiety on her account

to have reduced him, might be productive of fatal consequences.

There was no one in the kitchen: she passed into the hall; and thence into the parlour: there was no one in either. She returned into the hall, to observe whether Mr. Morden's hat and cane, which he usually wore when he walked out into the village, were hanging on their accustomed pin: she immediately saw them; and concluding that Emily and the maid were from home, and Mr. Morden in his study, she had no alternative but that of leaving the house or proceeding to it; as, if she went to Emily's chamber, there was a small window in Mr. Morden's study, which gave light to the stairs, which he must unavoidably see her pass. She approached the study door, and peeped through the key-hole; nothing but the books, ranged on shelves opposite to the door, met her eye: she listened, but could hear no noise within: she ventured to rap; and stood trembling with the expectation of hearing Mr. Morden ask, "who was there?"—No answer was returned; and she was hesitating whether to knock again, or not interrupt him whom she concluded to be sunk in study within, when a shriek behind her, followed by the exclamation of, "Oh gracious Lord! Miss Rachel!" made her start; and on turning round her head, she perceived Mrs. Smith.

"Here I am, safe home, Mrs. Smith," said Rachel.

"Oh Lord! Oh Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith, "you are too late; it is all over within this last half hour."—The tears ran down her cheeks.

"What is over?—What do you mean?"—inquired Rachel eagerly.

"He's gone to a better place than this world," returned Mrs. Smith; "so we must comfort ourselves as well as we can, and pray to God that we may follow him."

"Him! Who?" said Rachel, scarcely able to articulate.

Mrs. Smith appeared surprised to hear the question,

tion, and fearful of having spoken too unguardedly. —Rachel repeated her demand.—“ I know where the key of the church hangs,” said Tom Smith’s voice, at that moment entering the kitchen ; “ but I am sure I can never keep my hand steady to ring for Mr. Morden.” Rachel heard, shrieked, and sunk into the arms of Jacob Lamb, who had entered the parsonage with Tom Smith.

When life returned, the passing-bell struck on her ear : she shrunk from the sound, and hid her face in Mrs. Smith’s gown : presently she again raised her head, looking wildly round, as if to inquire whether the past was a vision or reality. Again the bell tolled : it struck conviction on her senses ; she burst into tears : the drops of agony that ran down her cheeks relieved her overburdened heart, and gave her power of utterance. “ Lead me to him,” she cried ; “ he cannot be gone for ever without having bade me one farewell !”

Jacob Lamb remonstrated : Rachel heard him not ; and continued—“ In pity let me see him—into his breast I poured my joys and griefs : he shared them all alike with me, and I will share death with him.”

Sorrow half choaked Jacob Lamb’s utterance ; and he would not suffer himself to speak, lest the exposure of his feelings should raise those of Rachel into greater wildness.

“ Consider, Miss Rachel,” said Mrs. Smith, “ it does not fall so hard upon you as upon poor Miss Emily ; she has lost her father, poor thing !”

“ But I never knew a father, and I have lost the friend who called me child,” returned Rachel.

Jacob Lamb entreated Rachel to suffer herself to be conducted to Mrs. Eringham’s, telling her that Miss Emily was there, and would, he was persuaded, be much benefited by her society ; but Rachel would not consent to leave the parsonage, whilst the remains of Mr. Morden continued in it.

Mrs. Smith accordingly went to inform Mrs. Eringham of Rachel’s arrival and determination.

Eugene presently entered the apartment where
Jacob

Jacob Lamb was still endeavouring to console Rachel. Grief, softened by pious resignation, sat painted on his brow : he looked the youthful portrait of his revered father. He started on seeing Rachel : her tears burst forth afresh on beholding him. He moved towards the window, struggling to subdue contending feelings. Rachel went to him, and took his hand ; she endeavoured in vain to speak : he clasped her in his arms :—the tears which stole silently down his cheeks fell on hers, as he held her to his heart.—“ Will you still call me your sister ? ” she with difficulty uttered.

“ Can I forget her who possessed the love of my — ” *father*, he would have said, but the swelling tide of grief closed his lips upon the word.

A momentary composure preceded a new trial : the presence of every friend, seen for the first time after the pressure of affliction, augments before it soothes our grief. Mrs. Eringham arrived in consequence of Mrs. Smith's summons : Rachel turned from her when she entered : Eugene left the room ; so did Jacob Lamb and his sister.

Mrs. Eringham gave her the most friendly consolation that can be bestowed on sorrow, whose cause is irremovable—silent attention. Why should we harass the breast of anguish by attempting to bestow a solace, which our own senses inform us it is not capable of receiving ?—Grief soothes itself much sooner into composure, than any outward effort can soften it.—Mrs. Eringham knew Rachel to possess reason, the most successful curb of impetuous sorrow ; and she was too wise to attempt the cure of art, where she knew the sufferer to possess the potent balm of nature.

Rachel requested to retire to bed, and entreated Mrs. Eringham to accompany her to her chamber : Mrs. Eringham pressed her to suffer herself to be conducted to her house ; but she repeated her first resolution, and Mrs. Eringham perceived it in vain to oppose it.

Mrs. Eringham placed herself upon the side of Rachel's bed.

“ Where—

"Where is Emily?" asked Rachel.

"At my house."

"How does she bear——" said Rachel, and stopped.

"I believe her sorrow is of too violent a nature to be lasting."

Rachel knew the weakness of her mind; thus easily conceived with how little aid from reason it must receive impressions of sorrow, and how quickly it would suffer any pleasing idea to chase them away.

"Tell me all—How was it?" asked Rachel after a pause.

"Not now," said Mrs. Eringham, "endeavour to compose yourself."

"Why not now?" said Rachel; "I cannot cease to reflect on what is—How can its attendant circumstances afflict me more than the ill itself?"

There was a truth in this demand, which Mrs. Eringham knew not how to confute; and yet she feared to comply.

"I am prepared," said Rachel: "speak, I entreat you: when I know all, I shall be more composed, because my thoughts will not be harassed with conjecture."

Mrs. Eringham knew not how any longer to refuse compliance; and informed her, that Mr. Morden had on the fourth day from the present fallen from his chair in a fit; that they had immediately apprehended fatal consequences from his disorder, and had written twice by the post, and once by a private hand, to request her immediate presence, and that they were much surprised at her not having arrived before.

Rachel, in her turn, began to explain as much of her late misfortunes as the harassed state of her brain would permit her to collect, in exculpation of her apparent neglect in not having instantly attended the summons to her dying benefactor; and then asked, "Whether he had blessed her with his departing breath?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Eringham answered, that he had been deprived of speech from the first moment of his being seized ; and that he had possessed his senses only a few minutes before his death.

Rachel sunk on her pillow. " Perhaps he might think of me then ?" she said.

" Be comforted in knowing that he did," replied Mrs. Eringham.

" How do you know that he did ?" said Rachel eagerly. " Oh, had I but seen the look he meant for me ! Pray tell me how you know he thought of me."

" Not now," returned Mrs. Eringham. " You must not dwell any longer on a subject that so deeply affects you. I fear I have already indulged you too much for your own welfare."

" No indeed ! I am very well," cried Rachel ; " I shall be quite composed, quite easy if you will but tell me how you know he thought of me."

" During the short interval of reason which preceded his death," returned Mrs. Eringham, " Eugene and myself were standing by the side of his bed : he laid one of his hands on the arm of his son, to arrest his attention ; and with a finger of the other, pointed to the cabinet which stands in his chamber : we procured the key, unlocked the doors, and gave into his hands a drawer, which he by signs asked us to bring him : from it he took a small packet, which he put into the hand of his son ; then, raising his eyes to heaven, he clasped his hands, and seemed to utter a silent blessing.

Rachel placed herself in the attitude described ; and the tears streamed from her eyes ; then, suddenly starting, she exclaimed—" But how was the packet connected with me ?"

" It was directed to be delivered to you after his death ?"

" Oh ! give it to me."

" Eugene replaced it in the cabinet."

Rachel sighed, and again sunk on her pillow.

Presently after Mrs. Eringham left the chamber, consigning

consigning her to the care of Mrs. Smith ; and in a short time a broken slumber weaned her thoughts from her afflictions.

In the evening arrived at the parsonage, in a chaise, the fat lady and her dog, from whom Rachel had parted in the morning ; when the lady proved to be no other than Mrs. Hutchinbunck. Her husband had paid the debt of nature nearly six weeks ; and she was now on her way to return a visit to her cousin Barnaby, which he had made to her at Bristol ; and had stopped at Hildden to take up her son, who had also received an invitation to visit his cousin.

Young Hutchinbunck was roused from his slumber to attend her ; and Mrs. Hutchinbunck having bestowed much commiseration on the family of the deceased curate to Susan, who delivered to her their excuses for not seeing her, departed, saying she should call in upon them on her return from her cousin's, which would be in about a month or six weeks.

Mrs. Eringham passed the greater part of the evening with Eugene and Rachel ; and on her departure she prevailed with the latter to give her a promise, that she would not visit the corpse of Mr. Morden that night.

On the following morning Alfred Eringham visited Rachel. He welcomed her return to Hildden, and participated in her sorrow with the warmest friendship. The present was a time which excluded subjects of indifference ; and they had passed some minutes in that silent consolation which is ever derived from the known sympathy of feelings, when Susan brought in Mr. Cranberry's compliments, and request to see Rachel.

Rachel desired that her thanks might be expressed to him for his attention ; but begged to be excused seeing him.

"You do right," said Alfred.

"I cannot bear the presence of any one but my intimate friends," replied Rachel.

"I am glad Cranberry is an exception then ; for he is one of the last men I should desire to see you receive upon that footing."

"Do

"Do you really wish me to understand you as you say?"

"I do."

"He was your intimate friend when I left Hilden last."

"Intimacies are not so easily dissolved as entered into."

"What do you mean?"

"That we ought to know a man well before we call him our friend, and not contract intimacies from the caprice of a moment."

"Have you disagreed?"

"Oh no; Cranberry is a man who has sufficient art to cover his conduct with a degree of plausibility, that defies those who bear him the strongest enmity to quarrel with him, without appearing unjust to his good nature."

"I have always considered him a character of that frivolous kind, who excite no passion but contempt; possessed of more principle than depravity by nature; but suffering the latter to triumph, because it makes them approved by their numerous competitors."

"I could have excused that," replied Alfred; but I fear the reverse of your statement: depravity triumphs, because it is master of the foil; and principle accidentally shows itself, because it is a rose in a bed of nettles."

"You are severe," said Rachel.

"I have been stung by the weed," replied Alfred.

"But let it drop."

"You have raised my curiosity," returned Rachel.

"If I could ensure your confidence, I would satisfy it," he returned.

"You are to judge whether you will hazard the risk of a second error like the one you are now repenting."

"No fear of the kind," he answered; your sex is different."

"And do you think it impossible to repent confidence placed in a woman?"

"In you, I do."

"What?"

"What are your fureties?"

"Reason and modesty."

"Will your Emily approve a female confidante?" asked Rachel.

"My Emily!" ejaculated Alfred, in an under tone; and rising from his chair, walked up and down the room. After a few turns, he resumed his seat.—

"Can a man be happy in a woman without a mind?" he said, fixing his eyes stedfastly on Rachel.

"Every one," returned Rachel, "derives not the same advantages from education, though all are by nature blessed with some quality to recommend them."

"A lover," he replied, "requires only personal accomplishments: they soon become familiarly indifferent to the husband; and what is the event of happiness founded on so slender a basis?"

"You asked my attention to something you were about to reveal to me," said Rachel, at a loss what to answer, "not my solution of the questions you should put to me."

"Tis true," he cried; "I avow to you, then, that I have been as hasty in my love as in my friendship."

"But the result of both has not brought with it the same feelings?" said Rachel, in a doubtful tone.

"Conclude it has," he returned; "and here I should have proposed the question, which the energy of what I felt, caused me improperly to advance before I had informed you to what it alluded.—Can I be happy in a woman who has no mind?"

"I cannot forbear proposing to you in turn a question," said Rachel:—"Whether it does not become every man to investigate the disposition of a woman sufficiently, to place his expected happiness with her beyond all doubt, before he makes her an offer of his hand?"

"And after he has made an engagement with her, not to swerve from it.—Would you not say so?" continued Alfred.

Rachel

Rachel remained silent.

"Yes, I was too hasty for my own happiness," he went on. "I liked Emily because she was handsome and good-humoured; and I never considered whether she possessed that more essential constitutor of felicity, good sense. She liked me too, because I admired her in the infancy of courtship openly to her face, and never addressed her without a compliment; and now she thinks me insipid, because I have discarded adulation for truth, and venture accidentally to point out to her any little impropriety in her conduct: but this is not all."—He paused.—"Cranberry flatters her, and has risen in her estimation to a superior being, I never speak a word now that sounds either of gentle reproof or advice, but she immediately checks me with—"Mr. Cranberry would not have said so"—"Mr. Cranberry knows better"—"Why don't you take pattern by Mr. Cranberry?"—or some such encomium on a man whose real sentiments she has not depth enough to fathom; for, if she had, she would not despise my admonitions."

"What can be the motive of Cranberry's attention to her?"

"Vanity," answered Alfred. "Emily is a generally acknowledged pretty woman; and it gives such a man imaginary consequence to rival her intended husband in her good opinion."

"Perhaps he really is your rival," said Rachel.

"To me he has the effrontery to reveal a passion for you, as a confidential secret," returned Alfred.

"Why don't you expose his sentiments to Emily?"

"Because she has not sufficient penetration or steadiness in her composition to let observation prove to her the truth of what I might tell her; or if she had even these qualities, I am sure she has not command enough over her tongue, to forbear informing Cranberry of what he would call my jealousy, and which would not only feed his pride, but perhaps raise his expectations to a conquest after marriage, which I could not so tamely brook. What can I do?"

What

What shall I do to save her and myself?—I have no plausible excuse for retracting my engagement; and yet I feel I should be committing more than an impropriety in fulfilling it.”—Again he rose, and traversed the room.

“Now too,” said Rachel, “when the occasion seems to call upon you particularly to protect her.”

“Are you not lest more destitute than she is?” asked Alfred; “you have no brothers.”

“But you never made me an offer of your hand,” returned Rachel.

“No,” said he with energy; “I never did make you that offer;” and rushed hastily out of the room.

All he said was mystery to Rachel: she well knew the frivolity of Cranberry’s mind, and the weakness of Emily’s; but she was at a loss to account for so determined a change in the sentiments of Alfred, while yet the lover of one he had so short a time before professed so ardently to admire. She had never seen in him any instances of a changeable temper. He possessed foibles, amongst which the love of society and pleasure were predominant; but he had a good natural understanding, which had been too well cultivated, to suffer him to commit a conscious vice.

CHAP. XIX.

Mystery thickens.

IN the evening, Emily, accompanied by Alfred and Mrs. Eringham, whose house stood only half a furlong distant from the parsonage, visited Rachel.

The first meeting between Emily and her friend renewed for a time the sorrow of both. When composure again returned to them, Rachel informed them of what she knew concerning John, and likewise of what had happened to herself.

When

When they were departed, and Rachel thought Eugene retired to rest, she procured from Susan the key of the apartment which contained the remains of her valued friend, and, desiring she might not be interrupted, proceeded to his chamber.

Having entered it, she placed her candle on a chair, and stood some moments gazing on the sheet which covered him, and through which appeared the outline of his lifeless form, without sufficient fortitude to raise it. Presently she extended her hand to draw it from his face; she trembled violently and sunk upon a chair by the side of the bed, unable to effect her purpose. Tears came to her relief; as she wiped them away, she cast her eyes round the chamber. In one corner hung the cassock which she had so often seen him wear; her sight rested upon it, and she could scarcely persuade herself that it was never to cover him again. By the chimney stood the easy chair in which she recollected he had sat when a strain in his knee, the consequence of a fall, had confined him to his room. On the table by her lay the watch which had so often passed through his hands; she pressed it to her lips, the tears fell from her eyes upon its glass; she replaced it upon the table, and with a determined exertion drew the covering from his face. Horror-struck, she gazed in silence on features once so regular, now distorted by pain, yet marked with patience and serenity. She kissed his icy lips, and found them stiff to her touch.—She recollected the pliant fondness with which they had once met hers. Those were the lips that had called her a defenceless outcast child. She fell upon her knees by the side of the bed. “Thou art gone to rest and happiness, while I am left to struggle with the afflictions of this world: were it not selfish then, when thou hast past thy days of labour here, to wish thee back from thy repose to lighten mine? Witness Heaven! I do not wish it.” As she uttered these words, her head sunk upon her hands which lay extended upon the side of the bed, and she knelt some moments lost in thought.

thought. When she again raised her eyes, those of Eugene in fervent prayer on the opposite side of the bed met them. She again lowered hers, nor rose from her station till his action informed her that his devotion was ended; she then took her candle and was moving towards the door. "Stay a minute, Rachel," said Eugene. She stopped. He went to the cabinet and unlocked it. Her heart throbbed. He took from it the packet, pointed to the corpse, and put it into her hand. She approached the bed again, kissed the insensible lips of him who lay upon it, and darted from the chamber into her own.

"To be delivered to Rachel after my death," in the hand writing of Mr. Morden, was, as Mrs. Eringham had told her, the superscription. She kissed it fervently, and then broke the seal. Sixteen bank-notes, for a hundred pounds each, first presented themselves to her view. She saw them with wonder, and began to read as follows: "My dear child, for such I will call you even in death, the sum you will find herein inclosed, is no gift of mine; but your own property. From the first moment of your being so extraordinarily thrown upon the bounty of Jonathan Parkinson and placed by him under my care, he has allowed one hundred pounds yearly for your maintenance; all which, conscious of your unprotected state, should you lose him and myself, I have saved to make my legacy to you at my death; as I had determined to rear you at my own expense, before Parkinson proposed himself to become your protector. May it, amidst the various ills and temptations with which this world abounds, prevent you from becoming destitute, and retain you from the necessity of being vicious."—"Generous worthy man!" exclaimed Rachel, insensibly aloud, while the tears which filled her eyes prevented her for some moments from proceeding to read the letter.

"About two years ago," it continued, "I received a letter, with the London post-mark, and without

without a signature, requesting me, if I should die before Rachel Ellis had discovered her parents, to leave her information in writing, that it was the command of both those parents that she should never marry till she knew them, as they had a son at large in the world, whom they were apprehensive she might see, and in ignorance of their relationship become his wife."

Here Rachel stopped to wonder and reflect in vain, that her parents should know where to address a command to be given to her, and yet forbear to see her; and that they should have purposely cast herself, and apparently also her brother, upon the benevolence of strangers, was a mystery beyond her solution.

After some time passed in thought, she again cast her eyes to the letter; the remaining part ran thus: "That Heaven may bless and protect you, and at length render you happy in this world, having mean-while strengthened you in power to ensure yourself felicity in that to come, is the sincere prayer of one whose heart has hitherto unceasingly glowed with the desire of your welfare.——Charles Morden."

Rachel sat lost in meditation till her candle, burning out in the socket, warned her to retire to bed, and she heard the village clock strike four as she laid her head upon the pillow.

On the following morning Alfred Eringham again visited her; she was alone in the parlour when he entered it. "Have you thought of our last conversation since it passed?" said he.

"It has had a share in my mind," she returned.

"You think me volatile, faithless, and unprincipled," exclaimed he. "I know you do."

"I think you have been so long the avowed lover of Emily Morden," replied Rachel, "that to retract now, the world will be very likely to conclude you what you ask me, whether I think you to be."

"But

"But do *you* think me so?" he said, emphatically.

"Not unprincipled, but certainly changeable," she answered.

"You cannot allow but that I have cause."

"You ought to have been less hasty in forming a decision of so great importance to your future happiness," she replied.

A silence ensued: Susan broke it by entering the room, and saying, that there was a gentleman from London at the door, who wanted to see Miss Rachel.

"I cannot see any body," cried Rachel hastily, who alternately saw the gentleman as Sir Bauble Blackman, and Doctor Spasm. "I am not at home."

Susan went to carry the message, and returning in a very short time, brought information, that the gentleman whose name was on that card would call again. On the card was printed "Sir Flat Fire," and underneath was written, "Rose and Crown, Hilden."

Rachel, on reading the card, coloured from that inexplicable sensation which is the result of many unpleasant concurring circumstances.

Alfred observed her countenance, and the blood fled from his. "Did you wish to see the gentleman here named?" he asked, with apparent emotion.

"Oh, no!" she replied.

"Is he a friend?"

"Merely an acquaintance."

"A valued one?" Alfred asked.

"I have only a very slight knowledge of him," she returned.

"But you may look forward to its improvement."

"Indeed I do not."

"It seems as if the gentleman wished to increase it."

"It appears as if he did," replied Rachel, "in calling upon me in consequence of so slender an acquaintance."

Alfred

Alfred sat uneasily upon his seat—" Shall you see him when he calls again ?" he asked, after a pause.

" I had rather not," returned Rachel ; " but I am afraid of offending him."

" Why are you afraid of offending him ?" stammered out Alfred.

" There is a politeness due to every one," said Rachel, " and he certainly intends me a civility, by calling upon me as he passes through the village."

" You knew then he was to pass through Hill-den ?"

" Oh, no ! but I suppose he would not come hither from London on purpose to call upon me."

Another pause ensued.

" Have you formed any plan for yourself, in consequence of the late melancholy change ?" Alfred broke silence by asking.

" I intend to refer my case, for advice, to Jonathan Parkinson, on his return to Hillden," said Rachel.

" You will meanwhile, I hope, make my mother your protectress. I am sure she has a heart open to your misfortunes."

" And there is now no one left to me in whom I would sooner confide for protection.—Indeed, I have even thought of offering myself for a companion to her, if Jonathan Parkinson will permit me so to do when you marry ; she will else be solitary, as you must necessarily leave her, since I find it is your intention to go into the army."

" It was never my real intention, though I believe I have mentioned it as such," replied Alfred. " I have flown to every and any resource to protract the evil day. Her father's death now causes a necessary delay, in which I am determined"—He hesitated—" to be just to myself and her," he added. A pause again ensued.

" I had rather not see this man," said Rachel ; " but I know not how to refuse him a second time."

" Let

"Let me call upon him at the inn," cried Alfred, eagerly, "as your messenger, and explain to him the circumstance which prevents your receiving visitors."

Rachel consented, and Alfred snatched up his hat, and set off for the Rose and Crown.

CHAP. XX.

Showing how to be a Man of Wit, Knowledge, and Elegance.

AS Alfred entered the inn, the landlord met him: "You have a gentleman in your house from London, I think, Robson?"

"I dare say he is, Sir; for he is mighty fine and comical spoken."

"When did he arrive?"

"Better nor two hours ago, Sir."

"Does he seem to know the village?"

"Oh, yes, Sir; he called it Hildden: he knows the village."

"When does he go away?"

"Upon my word, Sir, that's a question I never ax my customers."

"Did he enquire for any body in the village?"

"Why, no, Sir, not exactly: he said, 'So the young lady got home snug and tight,' I think he called it, says he, 'last Wednesday noon?'—'Oh, yes, your lordship,' says I; for he is a baronet, Sir; 'Miss Rachel got home safe,' says I.—'She lives at the what do ye call'ems, don't she?' says he.—'Ah,' says I, 'she did live with our parson, as worthy a man as ever broke bread.'—'Oh, I dare say,' cried he, interrupting me: 'look sharp, and show us the way.'—'To the parsonage, my lord?' says I.—'Ay,' says he: and so, as he was a baronet, I showed him the way myself."

"Is

"Is he at home now?" asked Alfred.

"Yes, Sir."

"Tell him a gentleman wishes to speak with him."

"Shall I say Mr. Eringham?"

"As you will."

Alfred waited in the bar till Boniface returned. "He axed me where you came from, Sir. So I told him you was acquainted with the lady he had inquired after—'Oh, roll him up,' cries he; and so I came running down to follow orders."

Alfred went up, and was ushered by the landlord into Sir Flat's apartment, who received him sitting before the fire.

"I wait upon you, Sir," said Alfred, "from Miss Ellis, with her apology to you for not being able to receive the visit you intend her. The sudden death of Mr. Morden, a particular friend with whom she resided, has rendered her unable to see company."

"Pshaw!" cried Sir Flat, "I'm nobody; need not mind me, nobody does. Sit down. Your name's Eringham, mine's Fire, and now we are acquainted. Well, and how is she?"

"She meets the loss of her much valued friend in a manner that does credit to her heart."

"The devil! she does! Tell her she must not cry away the lustre of her eyes, though; do you hear? be sure you tell that. I say, did she bid you ask me for her slip-flap and scent-bottle? because, tell her I shall come and bring them home when she has done piping."

"Do you remain in this village, then, any time, Sir?"

"Oh, gad! must stay till I see her—Came on purpose to bring home her slip-flap and bottle, and give my doxies a breathing."

"Then you have been much acquainted with Miss Ellis, Sir Flat?"

"Oh! devilish intimate. Have you any game in this part of the world?"

"We

"We have some," answered Alfred. "I had understood from Miss Ellis, that she knew you but slightly."

"She shammed—quizzed you. Where do you call the best sport?"

"I am no sportsman, Sir. You were a constant visitor at Sir Gilbert's then, Sir Flat?"

"Did she ever tell you how I roasted the old Ox?"

"I never heard her mention you, Sir, till she received your card this morning."

"Oh, gad! but I did, and dished him too. Perhaps you don't live in the house with her?"

"No, Sir."

"That's it then. Nobody sees me that don't talk of me."

Alfred motioned to depart.

"What! are you off? I'll walk with you; must have a pace; have not budged a dozen go's to-day. Stop. I say, do you ever play?"

"No, Sir."

"What! not the long push, and the round ball?" Sir Flat seized his arm, and made the motion of striking at billiards.

"No, Sir."

"Even or odd?"

"No, Sir."

"Chuckles?"

"No, Sir. Good morning."

"Will you drink?"

"No, Sir."

"Oh, damn it! you'll die if you do nothing to keep life and soul together."

"Alfred escaped, and Sir Flat rang the bell."

The landlord entered to him—"What did your lordship please to" —

"Who the devil's that gig?"

"My lord?"

"He there, that quiz." Sir Flat pointed out of the window by which he was standing, to Alfred, who was passing under it.

"Mr.

"Mr. Eringham, a young gentleman of our village, as I told your lordship."

"What does he do to keep himself alive?"

"I really don't know, your lordship, more than that he is going to be married to the daughter of our worthy curate, that's just dead."

"What's that for?"

"Love, I suppose, my lord."

"Oh! what! love's the go here, is it?"—Well, and t'other girl?"

"Miss Rachel, your lordship?"

"A d——d odd fish! Ain't she cursedly queer?"

"Why, my lord, it was rather a particular thing to be sure, her coming to be known here as she did."

"As how?"

"She was a foundling, picked up at our fair, my lord, by the rich quaker that lives at the great house that you might see yonder, if them tall trees wa'n't in the way."

"Get on."

"Yes, my lord: and so, as her parents could not be found high nor low, she was took in to live at poor Mr. Morden's."

"Oh! the parson fed her for love and good will, and so on."

"Ah! your lordship, he was as kind to her as if she had been one of his own; but he could not have afforded to have fed her at his own expense.—Poor man! both ends met hardly enough with him as it was."

"Well, how then?—Did she eat grass?—Did he common her?"

"Why, no, your lordship: it is very well known that Jonathan Parkinson, the quaker, kept her."

"D——d good! Cursed fine!" exclaimed the baronet. "Can't one have a squint at this rare fellow?"

"He's not in the village now, your lordship."

"Better and better. Neat and goish. A bottle of Champagne, my fine one. Directly! Do you hear?"

"I fell

"I sell nothing but port and liquors, your lordship."

"A gallon of rum and water then, my dasher. And here, old one, roll up Splash to moisten his gums."

"Your lordship's dog?"

"No, old fappy—my hero—my groom—the knowing crop Splash."

Boniface bowed in return for the compliment bestowed on him, and left the room.

Sir Flat's groom was a jockey from the turf; who, for the moderate salary of fifty pounds a year, undertook to superintend his stud; and who, by persuading the baronet to be constantly changing his horses, cleared himself at least three hundred more by the buying and selling. The baronet and his groom differed neither in dress nor manners; the only distinction between them was, that the former was the dupe, and the latter the sharper.

"She's hav'able," cried Sir Flat, when Splash entered the room. "She's hav'able, by G—d!"

"Right again," said Splash. "I'd have taken the long-odds you nicked her."

"It is to do, though," returned the baronet.

"She's kept by a broad-brim.—Curfed queer, ain't it?"

"The devil!" cried Splash.

"She's sanctified, I'd lay my soul. She preached Darlington into the squeams, for what you like."

"She's been bred in a methodist meeting, may hap," said Splash.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Sir Flat, "she has not enough of the Devil about her for that."

"Right again," vociferated the baronet's double; and they laughed each other applause.

The landlord now entered, with the largest bowl his house could afford, brimful of rum and water.

"I have not a gallon-bowl, my lord," said he;

"but the remainder of the gallon of liquor is mixed below ready to come up."

"Gallon!" cried Sir Flat.

"Yes,

"Yes, a gallon your lordship was pleased to order."

Again the inimitables burst into a laugh.

"What! you take every thing literally here, do you, my bully?" said Sir Flat.

The landlord stared, unable to answer, because he did not comprehend.

"Quiz the caxon," cried Splash.

"It swims, for a shiner," replied the baronet.

"It don't."

"It does."

"Done."

"Done."

"Done."

The landlord still stood with the bowl in his hands.

"Suck, my hero," cried Sir Flat.

"Your lordship?"

"Drink, drink."

"Your Lordship's condescending. After your Lordship, if you please."

"Swig, I say."

"If your Lordship please to command. Your Lordship's very good health. Mr. Splash, yours." He lowered his head to the bowl, for the bowl was too heavy to be lifted to his head. Sir Flat had placed himself in his front; and extending his whip over his head, with the hook at the end, drew the devoted wig into the sea of liquor.

"I win," cried Sir Flat, exultingly; and the shiner pays for the swill."

"Splash deposited the gold, and the landlord walked off, with his dripping wig, evidently not very well pleased by this specimen of his London guest's manual wit.

A bowl of scalded wine and biscuits was ordered; over which Sir Flat resolved, that though Rachel had been the mistress of a quaker in the country, she would be a new face in town, and might very well recompense him for the loss of Miss Darlington, "who had suddenly turned righteous," as he expressed it; and also flattered himself, as he eyed his own person, that very little art might win

her from her present possessor to himself. "I thought what she was," cried he, "when I saw her come out of Darlington's; and I swore I'd have her, if she could be come at; for I thought her well enough for a modest girl when I danced with her at Paragon's. Deep flut! to carry on the farce so well at the Ox's."

"The more likely to be yours," answered Splash.

"And be mine she shall," cried Sir Flash,—
"She's a devilish fine girl; but I don't think I shall like her long, for all that. She's hardly old enough; so, when I have done with her, you shall have the refusal of her."

"Right again," cried the double. "So I will."

And here we will close the scene awhile on men and manners, whose frequency in life alone prevents them from meeting that contempt they merit from principled society, who ought to aim at the annihilation of the insect more on account of its numbers than its power to hurt.

CHAP. XXI.

Conversation of a very common kind.

ALFRED returned to the parsonage, entered by the back door, and having desired Susan to inform Rachel that the gentleman who had left his card that morning would not call upon her again at present, he went home to dinner. He found his mother gone to visit Eugene and Rachel, and Emily receiving consolation from Cranberry.

"I saw the smartest fellow I ever clapped my eyes on ride into the Rose and Crown yard this morning in a curricule," said Cranberry.

"Dear me! Who could it be?" asked Emily.

"A buck, I'm sure," replied Cranberry.

"Like you, I suppose," said she.

"Me!" ejaculated the doctor with a laugh, tho' evidently flattered by the comparison. "You drive me away. Good morning," and he left the room.

Alfred

Alfred supported his elbow on the arm of the chair in which he sat, and rested his head on his hand.

"How does Rachel do to-day?" said Emily.

"Paying the debt of sorrowful reflection to her lost friend, without visitors," replied Alfred.

Emily was insensible of the reproof, and asked "If any body had called to see her."

"Nobody that was admitted," said Alfred.

"Somebody did call upon her then?"

"Yes."

"Who was it? Mr. Cranberry?"

"She was wise enough to refuse seeing him yesterday."

"You hate Mr. Cranberry because he is civil to me."

"He has his equivalent in you," said Alfred.

"I'm sure you never paid me such compliments as he does."

"I wish to teach you to value sincerity."

"I tell you the truth," said she, "and what would you have more?"

"I would have you *listen* to nothing but the truth."

"How can I help other people telling me stories?"

Alfred began a laugh, which he smothered.

"Why do you laugh at me?" said Emily. "What do you mean?"

"I would not have you pay sufficient attention to those stories to encourage their repetition."

"I listened to you."

"You accepted me for your husband."

"And a fine tyrant I am likely to have of you, if you scold me every time I speak to another man."

"And a very great comfort I have to expect from the necessity of giving constant checks to your unguardedness."

"My poor father never talked to me so," said Emily, and burst into tears.

"I wish you paid his memory more regard than to listen to such men as Cranberry."

"How do you mean?"

"That I never remarked you to do so in his presence."

"You must think yourself a wonderful being, to suppose that nobody else ought to be spoken to; but you may be mistaken in your extravagant opinion of yourself."

"Beware of falling into the same error," said Alfred.

"Your thoughts of me are very much changed since you first knew me. You used to talk very differently to me."

"That language," replied Alfred, "which is to convey to a mistress the first idea of her admirer's passion, may be allowed a little strength of colouring, which neither party ought to feel a wish for being kept up when their sentiments are mutually known."

"I think it might last till they are married, at least," said Emily.

"Why defer a reciprocally beneficial confidence in each other to any stated time?" asked Alfred.

"I'm sure I have no secrets from you."

"But you will not consider me as your friend."

"You are always finding fault with me. Is that the part of a friend?"

"Can it be the part of a friend, to suffer her he esteems to remain in any error which his advice may correct?"

"Nobody ever told me I had any errors but you; and you never found them out till you were to be my husband."

"I had not authority before to point them out to you."

"You had better not have chosen me for your wife if I was such a compound of faults."

"I wish you to understand," said Alfred, "that many actions which may be unnoticed in a single woman will not escape censure in one who is under a matrimonial engagement."

"I know you mean Mr. Cranberry," said she; "and I am sure he never said any thing to me but what was very handsome."

"I dare say not," replied Alfred, sarcastically.

"No, nor he never took any liberties with me either; if you mean that."

"If

"If I did think it, I should have spoken to him, not you."

"Well, what then? Tell me. I will know."

"As the first instance, I think solitude would become the present time better than receiving visits."

"That must mean Mr. Cranberry, because I have seen nobody else; and I am sure it would have appeared very odd in me not to have admitted him when he called to console me."

"Admitting that you were right in that," returned Alfred, "I think silence would have been more in unison with your present situation than to have expressed a wonder, half amounting to a wish, to learn who was the driver of the curriole."

"Mr. Cranberry introduced the subject; and how could I help saying something? I am sure I don't know what I did say. I spoke without thought."

"Without meaning, I can credit; but words are the result of thoughts."

"It is very hard I mayn't try to amuse my thoughts then a little," said she, "with such a weight of affliction as I have upon them."

"Reflect," said Alfred.

"I can only reflect on what makes me melancholy and unhappy."

"Reason your mind into converting what is past into happiness to yourself, from the certain knowledge of happiness being bestowed on him who is gone. The death of a valued friend, more especially a father, is a field for religious reflection, which ought not to be lightly passed over."

"Oh, dear! pray don't talk so!" cried Emily, her tears bursting forth afresh. "I can't bear to hear it—I can't indeed. I think I see my poor father."

"Continue to think you see him witnessing all your future actions, and you will be undoubtedly happy."

"Oh! I am glad I did not see him die, as you wanted me. I should never have had his last look out of my thoughts."

"Don't give way to such childish ideas," said Alfred.

Alfred: "we are commanded to visit the bed of death, as the most striking lesson of humiliation to mortality."

"Oh! I can't bear it. Hold your tongue. I can't bear it," exclaimed Emily, and ran sobbing out of the apartment.

"And this is the woman," cried Alfred, rising from his seat, and traversing the room, "whom I have chosen to be the partner of my life;—to whom I am to look for the consolation or sympathy under affliction;—whose endearments are to strengthen my mind under the pressure of calamity;—whose example is to make my children"—— "all I could wish to see them!" hung on his utterance; but he checked the words on his tongue, and paused. ——

"Why did I not sooner learn to value thy noble heart, Rachel?" burst, after a few moments, from his lips.

"I always told you she was better worth having," said Jacob Lamb, who, in entering the apartment, had heard the last sentence pronounced by Alfred.

"Than who?" said Alfred, confused, and anxious to learn whether Jacob had fully understood the import of what he had heard.

"Than any body," replied Jacob: "There is not such another young lady in the kingdom.—Dear child! I think I see her now, when she was only up to my knee."

"You have a ready imagination, Jacob;" said Alfred, endeavouring to force a smile.

Jacob turned away his head, and after a momentary hesitation, shut the door. "Your father, and your father's father," said he, "always entrusted me with their secrets; are you afraid of telling me yours?"

"Why should I, Jacob, after the many proofs of regard and affection we have all had from you?"

"Is your word, your honour, pledged to Miss Morden?"

"Yes."

"Then marry her. Don't break your word," replied Jacob; and was leaving the room in visible agitation.

Alfred

Alfred sprung forward, and caught his arms. "Stay, Jacob!—Hear me!—Hear me!—Why did you speak so ardently in commendation of Rachel, and yet so peremptorily tell me to connect my fate with Emily's?"

"Because it is my duty to bid you act honourably."

Alfred sighed, in conviction of the truth of Jacob's argument; then said—"But tell me why you *feel* so decided a preference for Rachel."

Jacob pointed to his heart. "It's here, and I can't help it," he returned, and burst out of the room.

"Even this poor fellow," thought Alfred, on being left alone, "feels the folly of my choice, and pities me. Why did I not reflect before it was too late? Is it certainly too late now? Jacob speaks of honour. Emily trifles with mine. Why should I feel so scrupulous of hurting her who has so little feeling for me? But is this not a selfish, an unprincipled argument, that I should authorize myself to put on an unjust conduct, because hers is faulty? Oh! why did I ever see Emily with the admiration with which I once beheld her?"

Jacob again entered the apartment. Alfred wished to return to the topic on which they had been speaking; and, uncertain how to introduce it, repeated his last sentence.

"Because you had never looked at Miss Rachel," replied Jacob.

"At her mind I never had, I grant you."

"Not her eyes either," returned Jacob: "if you had seen them, you need not have looked farther."

"True," said Alfred. "They beam the enviable power of bestowing happiness."

"They are as like your own," cried Jacob, "as either of hers or yours is to its fellow."

"Do you mean to compliment me?" asked Alfred.

"I spoke the truth," said Jacob: "if that proved a compliment, I am the better pleased, because

cause it is so rarely considered as such.' So saying, he left the room.

Alfred rose and went to the glass: he found that his eyes were of a dark brown, and he well knew Rachel's were of that colour; but still he did not perceive any resemblance of expression between them. Whilst he was standing opposite to the mirror, Emily returned. "I hope you are pleased with yourself?" she cried.

"Not very," he answered.

"What! you see you have been cross to me then, and are sorry for what you have done?"

"Repentance sometimes come too late," said Alfred, carelessly.

"I am sure I forgive you," cried she, motioning to kiss him.

He moved towards her; but the entrance of Mrs. Eringham prevented the salute.

Towards evening Alfred again set out for the parsonage. In his way thither he met Cranberry. 'Where now?' cried the doctor.

"To the parsonage," returned Alfred.

"Could not you take me with you to-night?"

"Rachel refuses all visitors"——

"But yourself," said Cranberry.

"She honours me in the exception."

"Married men are always exceptions," said Cranberry, laughing.

"I am not one," replied Alfred.

"No; but you soon will," he returned. "So would I, if the fates could be induced to smile on me." He took Alfred's arm. "Take a turn up the road with me. I have something to say to you."

Alfred knew not how to refuse compliance, so suffered himself to be led.

Cranberry continued.—"I shall go mad, absolutely distracted, if I can't make an impression on that girl's heart."

"What girl?"

"Rachel! Rachel! The divine Rachel! Whom else can I mean?—Do you think she'll have me?"

Alfred was silent.

"You

"You think she won't," continued Cranberry.
"Perhaps you have heard her say she would not?"

"Oh, no! I never heard her speak on the subject."

"Do you know" replied Cranberry—"keep my secret though—I have made her one offer; she refused me, to be sure; but I believe if I had followed her up close I might have had her then; she seemed I can't tell how; you know how it is when women don't exactly know their own minds, and men are afraid of pushing the question too home, for fear of being refused, because they have not patience to wait the lady's time. However, by Jupiter, I'll have another trial."

"You think her then not wholly indifferent to you?"

"Upon my soul I am vain enough to think she is not; however if I could but see her, a very little time would determine my fate.—Egad, somehow, I always think she has taken more care to show me she did not like me, than a woman wholly indifferent to a man would have taken the pains of doing."

This was a remark above Cranberry's imagination to fabricate; it must have been derived from observation; it stung Alfred to the heart.

Cranberry stopped speaking; Alfred was on the point of answering, when the girl who acted the part of waiter at the Rose and Crown, ran up to them—"Sir, if you please," she said, "you must come to our house directly: there's an accident has happened."

"What's the matter?" asked Cranberry.

"The lord from London," replied the girl, "has put his arm out wi' boxing along wi' our George Oster."

"The devil!" cried Cranberry. "Good night, Eringham;" and away he ran, pulling the girl along with him.

Alfred stood fixed in thought. "Are these the men," he said, "who would aspire to the hand of Rachel? The one lames himself in a professional boxing match, and the other trifles with a girl to

insignificant even for wickedness, in the same breath in which he has declared himself her adorer. And am I more worthy of her?—Distraction!—Oh! that I were married to Emily; that I were but any thing but what I am! This temptation to be false, with the power to be so; and the aggravations that induce me to it, with their strong opponent, Honour, struggle in my brain to madden me!" He folded his arms and walked hastily towards the parsonage.

CHAP. XXII.

Scenes of Sorrow.

PROCEEDING quickly, his sight lost in reflection, the sound of 'Alfred' arrested his steps, and starting from his reverie, he cast his eyes towards the voice, and perceived Jonathan Parkinson.

"Parkinson?" returned Alfred.

"Yes," he replied, "it is I; I have hastened with all expedition to alleviate, as much as doth lie in my power, the hearts which the death of my friend Charles Morden must have filled with sorrow."

"No one feels it more severely than Rachel," said Alfred.

"What! not his children?" asked Parkinson.

"Yes," answered Alfred, hesitatingly.

They were already arrived at the parsonage.

"Do thou go in first," said Jonathan Parkinson, "and say, I am here."

Alfred obeyed by entering the parlour, while Parkinson remained in the hall, and announcing him to Rachel and Eugene whom he found sitting together, the information was received by them both in silence, but they started from their seats, and turned their sight towards the door.

"Where is he?" asked Rachel, after a momentary pause.

"Here,"

"Here," said Parkinson, entering the room.

"My father!" cried Rachel, and sunk on her knees before him.

"My child!" replied Parkinson, and tottered to a chair upon which he fell.

Rachel followed him, and took his hand. "Heaven bless you," she exclaimed; "I always revered you, but now I love you; you have thawed my respect for you into affection, by answering to a name I put on all who smile upon me, because I have no one to fix it upon, and I feel its utterance the greatest blessing of my existence."

Jonathan Parkinson struggled to subdue the tears which started in his eyes, while he gasped for breath.

"You never hailed me with that tender name before," continued Rachel; "will you call me so again?"

Parkinson drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and hid his face in it.

"If I have said too much; or too freely," continued Rachel, "pray forgive me; my heart, softened by misfortune, melts weakly at a sound that breathes affection."

"I will protect ye all," said Parkinson, recovering utterance, "I will be a father to ye all;" he extended one hand to Rachel and the other to Eugene: "do you feel like orphans," he continued, "but do ye remember that ye are endowed with reason, which should make the present calamity light, by raising your views and thought beyond mortality."

"You will not then desert me?" said Rachel with emotion.

"I do tell thee I will not," answered Parkinson, with energy.

"Then you are my father indeed: for how can I feel so tenderly for him, who, though my natural protector, casts me off from him, as I must do for you who compassionate my friendless state?"

"I am fulfilling a duty in which I may venture to assert I am not single now;—the son doth inherit

too much of the father to be deficient in any virtue he possessed — Do not thou make me too proud, by fixing on me all thy esteem, but give the share his father held of thee to him," returned Parkinson, and put her hand into Eugene's, who received it with warmth.

"Does he mean more than his words convey?" Alfred asked himself.

Rachel seated herself next to Parkinson, and Eugene placed himself on her other side.

Parkinson inquired for Emily and John Morden; Eugene answered to his first question; and Rachel, in attempting to speak of John, became overpowered by the recollection of circumstances attendant on the last time of her seeing him, and burst into tears.

Parkinson eagerly asked the cause of her emotion. — "Oh! I have much to tell you, much advice to ask," replied Rachel, "my reputation has been slanderously attacked; I have been wrongfully imprisoned!"

"By whom?" ejaculated Parkinson.

"My story is long, and must not be partially told," said Rachel, "lest it seem to criminate the innocent with the guilty."

"Do thou speak it fully then," said Parkinson.

"In private to you, if you please," returned Rachel.

"As thou wilt," Parkinson replied, and they left the room.

Eugene turned his eye towards Rachel, as she closed the door of the apartment, and sighed. — Eugene's was a mind that thought much, but said little.

"Poor girl!" exclaimed Alfred, "indebted to the friendship of strangers for the offices of affection a parent ought to bestow on her."

"If she has one in existence," said Eugene.

"If she has," replied Alfred, "he cannot have the feelings of a man, or they would teach him to glory in the protection of so lovely a girl; — if she has not, 'twere better for her to know herself an orphan

phan, than to exist in this perplexing doubt.—I pity her sincerely.”

“ I love her,” said Eugene.

“ You have ever lived in the intimacy of brother and sister,” said Alfred, fixing a scrutinising eye upon the countenance of Eugene.

“ More intimately still,” answered Eugene : “ we have lived as friends.

Alfred felt his own countenance undergoing a change, and drew the screen before him. “ I wonder she is still single,” he said:

“ Perhaps she wishes to know herself before she marries,” returned Eugene.

“ But if she never should ?” asked Alfred.

Eugene was silent.—Alfred was beginning to speak again, when Mrs. Ervingham entered to visit Rachel, and hearing that she was in the study with Jonathan Parkinson, she seated herself in the parlour to await their return to it.

Parkinson heard Rachel’s account without interruption, but with visible agitation ; and when she had concluded it, he exclaimed, “ Thou art innocent, thou must be innocent, and thou shalt be proved so ; I do not accuse any one ; suspicion seemeth, I think, to fall upon the knight Paragon, and the men of law as his agent ; but do thou content thee, Rachel, that I will remove the stain of guilt from thee, to whomsoever it is due.—I do seldom employ the law, but in this case I do feel it a duty I owe to the innocence of a fellow creature under my protection, to have recourse to the evil necessity.—There be many honest men in the profession as well as unjust ones, and equity will triumph with a man of honour, even in the administration of the law ; so set thou thy heart at rest : thy reputation shall be restored to thee, and acknowledged spotless by thy aggressors to the world.—When the mortal part of our friend Charles Morden shall have been consigned to the earth, I myself will go with thee to the city of London, and face thy accusers to their shame.”

Rachel pressed his hands in hers, but could not speak.

After

After a few moments of silence had regained Rachel a tolerable composure of spirits, Jonathan Parkinson led her back into the parlour. Alfred was gone, and after the first salutations were passed between Mrs. Eringham and Parkinson, they proceeded to assist Eugene with their advice in the arrangement of his father's funeral, and many concerns to which his death had rendered attention necessary.

The deceased curate had left in all thirteen hundred pounds, twelve thereof to be divided equally amongst his children, fifty as a legacy to his old servant, who was entirely dependent on his bounty, and too old to apply for a new service; twenty-five pounds to the poor of his village, and an equal sum as a legacy to Alfred Eringham.

Rachel longed to throw her legacy into the general scale, and sue for an equal division with his children; but the fear of offending the avowed protector of Eugene, or the intended husband of Emily, by the interposition of her charity, prevented her wish; and she resolved, by some other means less wounding to the feelings of all, to make them share what she possessed.

The following Monday was fixed by Jonathan Parkinson for the interment of Mr. Morden, and the successive Wednesday for his setting out on his journey to London with Rachel.

Alfred passed the evening in the room with Emily, but they seldom spoke; he read in the hope of driving away reflection, and at an early hour retired for the night.

The next morning he rose with the break of day, and strolled as soon as it was light into the village; as he passed Cranberry's house, the owner, whose profession called him contrary to his inclination early abroad, came from it,

"Good morning," said Alfred.

Cranberry returned his salutation, and continued, "So you know my patient, sir Flat?"

"I have seen him."

"Yes, he told me you called on him yesterday morning; he means to return your visit to day;—it seems he knows Rachel very well."

"His

"His knowledge of her was the occasion of my call."

"So I found; however, he says he is determined to take your visit as a compliment, as he knows nobody here but myself, and wants society."

Alfred was silent.

Cranberry continued, "I told him you were going to be married. He asked to see Emily: so, I said, if he called upon you he most likely would, as she was at your house. You have no objection?"

"Oh no, if she has none."

"You know she likes company."

"I know she does," answered Alfred, gravely.

"Sir Flat was devilish bad; arm quite out at the shoulder. Well, good morning! you are an idle man, and I am a busy one." He moved hastily a few steps along the road, then stopped suddenly, and called out, "Sir Flat and I are going to swim a hedge-hog when I have been my rounds; will you come?"

"I am engaged."

"You'd better come; however I'll call upon you with the baronet: adieu!" and away he ran.

Alfred walked on in thought.—That sir Flat and Cranberry, from the similarity of their frivolous dispositions, were become friends on the acquaintance of a few hours, he did not wonder; but what could be the motive of sir Flat's coming to Hildden, and remaining any time in so obscure a place, unless he was impelled to it by a passion for Rachel, he could not devise.

He ascended a little hill at the extremity of the village, on whose brow a bench had in former days been placed, on which the inhabitants of the parsonage had often sat to behold the setting sun and rising moon. The white frost, which covered it, prevented it from affording him a pleasurable seat, and he leaned his arm against an oak which grew by its side: he had scarcely done so, when he heard voices below him in discourse, and the curiosity natural to frail man caused him to listen to what was said.

"I could
tell you I had seen her."

"I could have wished them to have come together," said a voice which Alfred immediately knew to be that of Jacob Lamb: "I could have wished it indeed."

"Eugene has shared my protection through life equally with her," replied a voice which instantly spoke itself to be Parkinson's, "and I had always designed that their fates should ultimately be connected."

"But I am sure they love one another," returned Jacob; "he always speaks more affectionately of her than he does of any body else."

"Thou knowest he is on the point of marriage to another," replied Parkinson.

"I wish he was not," said Jacob, "and so I believe does he heartily enough if he would speak the truth; and I must say, I wish they may have one another yet."

"May they not be equally happy asunder, with each a chosen partner?" asked Parkinson.

"I don't know how it is," cried Jacob; "but I vastly like to see relations come together."

"But supposing they do," said Parkinson, in answer, "and that Eugene should then——" the sound of the voice died away, and Alfred heard no more. He could scarcely support himself; he felt the mingled sensations of hope and fear. That he had been the person spoken of, he could not doubt, as Parkinson had said that he who had been named was on the point of marriage; nor did his knowledge of the warm interest he well knew Jacob to take in his happiness, suffer him to doubt, from their conversation of the preceding morning, that Rachel was the female with whom Jacob wished his fate to be united, especially as he was urging his suit to her benefactor Parkinson. But then Jacob had pronounced them relations, and Parkinson had heard him declare them such as a matter of course. That they might be distantly related—and distantly it could only be, as Jacob had wished their union—was no matter of surprise to him. What particularly excited his astonishment was, that Jonathan Parkinson, and Jacob Lamb

Lamb, who had apparently never seen each other till the latter came with Mrs. Eringham to reside in the village, should now appear on terms of so great and secret intimacy, and acquainted with circumstances unknown to those whom they peculiarly concerned. He reflected, endeavoured some time in vain to solve the mystery before him, and at last resolved for the present to bury what he had heard in his breast.

CHAP. XXIII.

A Note.

NOTHING material occurred till the day of the funeral arrived, except that Sir Flat Fire had once called at Mrs. Eringham's, where he was introduced by Cranberry, coolly received by Alfred, and considered a mighty smart and funny man by Emily Morden.

On the Monday morning the solemn train, in which Emily and Eugene, Alfred and Rachel, joined, entered the church wherein they had so often attended to the pious word of him whom they were now about to consign to the earth. The rector of a neighbouring parish read the service of the dead with an emphasis and feeling that melted those few hearts who did not weep before. When the earth was first thrown upon the coffin, Rachel struggled with her tears till she became overpowered by their restraint, and fainted; Eugene and Alfred supported, and endeavoured to revive her; Emily wept, but her emotion was too violent, and too free, to subdue her strength. Cranberry and Sir Flat witnessed the ceremony from a distance, Cranberry wearing a suit of black in compliment to the deceased, whom he had attended.

The painful ceremony being ended, they returned home amidst the tears of the observers for the departed, and prayers for their preservation. Rachel
leaned

leaned for support on the arm of Alfred, and a variety of ideas which the present solemn moment could not dispel, filled his brain.

The day passed at the parsonage in that silent composure which succeeds grief, when it knows its most painful task to be ended, and begins to be meliorated by returning reason.

Parkinson joined the party, and strengthened it in fortitude by his precepts and example.

The next day a new world seemed to break upon them; Emily's possessions were removed to the house of Mrs. Eringham, and the furniture of the parsonage underwent an appraisement for the accommodation of Mr. Morden's successor, who was to take possession of it in the following week.

They together visited the garden and field which had been the scenes of their youthful sports, entered each particular room, and left the house with a regret which could not have felt exceeded, had they left it for ever with its late possessor still alive.

Rachel had removed to Mrs. Eringham's on her first rising; and in the course of the morning Sir Flat Fire called upon her there. He expressed himself "curledly happy to see her;" told her, "that if she looked in the glass she must wish her relations to die plump one after another, mourning became her so devilishly well;" and after a lounge of a couple of hours, during which his conversation consisted only of those high or low bred compliments (which ever the taste of the reader may please to style them) to Rachel, and having reminded her how he had roasted and then dished the old Ox, his present favourite joke, he departed the presence of Mrs. Eringham, Emily and Alfred having prevented him from plainly expressing to Rachel the purport of his visit to Hildon, and saying he should call upon her soon again.

"Dear me!" cried Emily, immediately on Sir Flat's leaving the room, "you have made a conquest: Rachel, this is your sweetheart, I am sure."

"I never saw him but twice in my life before," answered Rachel.

"But love must have a beginning," returned Emily, and tittered.

"I believe it too generous a passion to hold a place in the heart of a man of his description," replied Rachel.

"Of what are you speaking?" asked Alfred, who caught the last sentence, as he returned into the room from conducting out Sir Flat.

"Love," cried Emily.

"And this is your account of its nature?" said Alfred, turning to Rachel.

"No," she replied, "my idea—"

"Delicately turned," said Mrs. Eringham, with a smile.

"Where we speak such truth from theory, is not the world apt to give us credit for a little experience?" asked Alfred.

"As you certainly have that experience," answered Rachel, "you best know what credit is due to my theory."

"Well returned," said Mrs. Eringham. "Come, come, Alfred, this questioning of hearts is not fair; the secrets of your own are known; so you want to put others on a par with yourself."

Alfred was about to answer hastily, but checked the words on his tongue, and walked up the room.

"Why, what can bring Sir Flat to this stupid place, if he is not your lover, Rachel?" said Emily.

"He comes to shoot," answered Alfred.

"Why, I have heard Mr. Cranberry always complain that there never were any birds in this part of the country," replied Emily.

"Then he'll stay the shorter time," returned Alfred.

"I don't wish him to go away, I'm sure," she answered; "for I think him as pleasant a man as Mr. Cranberry; I like him very much."

"Suppose you dine with him to-day at Mr. Cranberry's then instead of me," said Alfred: "you are very welcome to supply my place."

"Dear me! how odd you talk," cried Emily; "you are always so queer, one don't know how to speak to you."

Rachel

Rachel took her work from the table, and left the room; and Alfred not replying to Emily's last speech, she soon followed her.

At the dinner hour Alfred went to Cranberry's, where he had promised to meet Sir Flat, not from inclination, but because he had no plausible excuse for refusing the invitation.

In somewhat more than an hour after the time appointed, Sir Flat came; and immediately on his entering, a backgammon table fixing his eye, he proposed a game before dinner, to which Cranberry of course assented. Alfred did not play. Sir Flat won the first game, and then insisted on giving Cranberry his revenge. Cranberry was then fortunate, and Sir Flat swore they must play the conqueror before they stirred. Victory rested with Sir Flat, Cranberry paid his guinea with the air of a buck throwing away what is not his own, and then rang for dinner, which had been ordered at four, and made its appearance on table at half after six.

The meal passed off as many a one has done before, where the calls of appetite supersede conversation. When the cloth was removed, and the bottle briskly pushed to the facetious toasts of Cranberry and his noble guest, Sir Flat pleased himself by recounting some of the wonderful adventures of his life, knowing, as he told them, the world from *experience*; and presently pulling a smelling bottle from his pocket, he cried, "Here, do you smoke this gig?"

"No: what is it?" said Cranberry.

"Whose is it?" you mean, my fine fellow," replied the baronet.

"Ay, whose?" returned Cranberry.

"A cursedly fine girl's: and if you both don't say so, you are d——d flats."

"What's her name?" asked Cranberry.

"Oh! G——d!" vociferated the baronet, "you both know her, devilish well too; and I want to hear about her from you."

"Rachel?" said Cranberry.

"You

"You nick me," exclaimed Sir Flat.

"And a devilish fine girl she is indeed," replied Cranberry.

"And that old gig the Quaker ——" returned the baronet, laughing significantly, and appearing not to have finished his sentence, though he did not continue to speak.

"Oh, what! you have heard about it?" said Cranberry.

"Oh! G—d! ay, what a damned lucky old quiz the broad-brim must be, to have such a fine girl fall in his way!"

"It was no had thing for either, I think," returned Cranberry.

"What! he does the thing handsomely by her, eh?"

"Oh yes."

"Curse me, but I should like to do him out of her."

Alfred and Cranberry both conceived this sentence in a matrimonial and consequently in a wrong sense; and it produced by no means pleasant feelings in either of them. Alfred raised his empty glass to his lips, and Cranberry stirred the fire.

"Do you think it would do? can I nick her, eh?" asked Sir Flat after a pause.

"She can best answer that question," said Cranberry.

"By G—d I'll push it; I rolled down here on purpose to give her my terms."

A pause ensued.

"D——d odd, the quaker having her!" he continued. "I thought she was one of the trade when I plumped upon her at my girl's in London. Did the old gig, Sir Gibby, smoke she was kept?"

"Kept!" exclaimed Alfred and Cranberry, at the same moment.

"Ay, by G—d, I am up to the go, you see—Did not think me so deep, eh? I know the world from experience, and I've smoked that he's kept."

"Sir!" cried Alfred, the blood of honest resentment mounting into his cheeks, "were I not convinced

vinced of the strict honor of Miss Ellis so firmly as I am, I could not suffer the imputation you lay on her character to pass unnoticed, when charged on any woman who lives in intimacy with my mother, and intended wife; I must therefore desire you to retract your words."

"What the devil!" cried Sir Flat, blustering, "do mean to tell me I said a lie? If you do, speak out, I ain't afraid."

"Nor am I, Sir Flat," replied Alfred, with a cool firmness of manner.

"Nor I, by G—d," returned Sir Flat, vehemently. "I maintain that I have been authentically informed she is kept, and that I believe it's true, because I saw her at my girl's; and d—n me if I retract my words."

"You absolutely refuse it?"

"I do."

"You maintain that Miss Ellis is ——"

"Kept," cried Sir Flat.

Alfred left the room, went to the Rose and Crown, entered the bar, and having called for pen and paper, wrote the following words:—"Sir, the satisfaction of words, on an idea falsely conceived and illiberally supported, you refused me. I am therefore compelled to require that of action. I shall be at the gate on the common to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, provided with a brace of pistols, of which you shall have the choice.—Alfred Eringham." Having sealed the note, directed it to Sir Flat Fire, and given it to the girl to carry to him at Cranberry's, Alfred rushed into the road. Passion was beginning to cool, and reflection to return; he paused in thought; he had offered himself to the chance of giving or receiving the stroke of death; the dictates of honour had not steeled him against the powerful instinct of nature; and he felt, that, while justified by the world, his own heart condemned him. But then, to hear the purity of Rachel traduced, and by a boy too, whose insolence was his only support; to leave her character at his mercy, without attempting its vindication,—insensibility itself could not have borne

borne it unmoved. He walked hastily along the road, unmindful whither his steps led him—thought bewildered, almost maddened, his brain. “If it were a sin,” he considered, “to oppose himself voluntarily to the hand of death, were it not equally a crime to commit the fame of her he knew to be spotless, unvindicated to the tongue of slander?—of one, too, so peculiarly an object of protection to all, because she had no one whom she was authorised to challenge in her defence; of one too, whom he most revered.” Here again conscience interposed itself: “was he justified in that reverence?” He had already argued himself from the strength of his inclination into believing that he was, and would not now review the separate arguments that had induced him to think so. He was resolved to strengthen in his own imagination the rectitude of his present action, by dwelling on the plea which must operate most in its favour—his love for Rachel. By proving himself worthy of her, how might he not impress her mind in his favour! But then he might fall in her defence! Thought paused on the idea; he struck his forehead, and exclaimed aloud, “Oh Rachel! Rachel! should I never behold you after this night!”

A faint shriek, which the utterer seemed to endeavour to suppress, roused his sight from his mind to outward objects; he perceived that he was in the church-yard, and by the light of the stars he saw a female kneeling over Mr. Morden’s grave.

He approached towards her in silence; she rose, ran swiftly from him, and became obscured in the distance before he could perceive which way she had turned.

The figure appeared to him like that of Rachel; he knew she had seen him; and fearing she might have known him, and on his return home question him the cause of his being there, which he would find it difficult to explain, as he had resolved to keep secret from his family the meeting which was to take place in the morning, he immediately moved towards his mother’s house in the hope of reaching

and ran back with unobscured—no further was
sated

it before Rachel, and thus inducing her to think herself deceived in imagining she had seen him.

At his mother's door, as he reached it, he saw Cranberry standing, and heard himself inquired for by him. Cranberry, on perceiving him, said, "Eringham, I am looking for you; let me have a word with you."

Alfred receded a few paces into the road, and then told him to speak.

"This is a foolish affair between you and Sir Flat."

"An unpardonable one," said Alfred, with warmth.

"Phoo! Phoo!" replied Cranberry, "I think it may be easily compromised; you were hasty." He hesitated—"If you would see Sir Flat," he continued, "and just make any little apology."

"Alfred's blood boiled; indignation for some moments, choked his utterance. "Apology!" he exclaimed: "do you want to provoke me, under the influence of a harassed brain, to treat you as you merit?"

"What the devil do you mean?" cried Cranberry.

"To ask you," said Alfred, "whether you dare at this moment avow, that you have often confessed to me, what you called a passion for Rachel?"

"Why should not I?"

"And dare you, having said that, avow yourself the man who heard her stigmatised as a disgrace to her sex, by the most contemptible of his own, without offering a word in her vindication?"

"I took it as it was meant, a joke," replied Cranberry, in a confused voice.

"Allowing it to be meant so," said Alfred, "it was equally culpable; female innocence is too sacred a subject for the tongue of licentiousness to sport with."

Rachel, returning from the grave of her deceased benefactor, at this moment passed them.

"Hush!" said Cranberry, and pointed to her.

"For the present," said Alfred, "it is my intention: but when the impending crisis is over, I shall consider it as my duty, if you attempt the slightest progress towards the heart of Miss Ellis, to inform her that you are the friend of her slanderer."

"On

"On what presumption?" asked Cranberry.

"On the presumption of that honour, which will never suffer a man who possesses it to see an innocent, virtuous, and lovely girl become the dupe of him whose heart is void of it."

"I did not expect such language from you," said Cranberry.

"Nor I such conduct from you, when I first knew you."

"You are heated," replied Cranberry, turning the subject from himself to Sir Flat, "and perhaps forget his acknowledged superiority in the world."

Alfred looked all that was contemptuous. "Am not I a man?" he cried. "What can he boast more from nature than myself? and shall I tamely suffer him to trample upon those feelings which are coeval with my right of existence? He bears a title and possesses wealth, I allow: but let him learn that my father was a soldier, who fought in the preservation of those treasures from which he gains his superiority; and that his son will not brook an insult."

"You rail now at a sect, and not an individual," said Cranberry, attempting to smile.

"I deny it," replied Alfred. "Rank and fortune add weight to virtue; but without it they claim no distinction. I shall meet Sir Flat at the hour appointed."

"You have used *me* ill," said Cranberry.

"I am ready to give you redress," returned Alfred.

Cranberry did not answer. Alfred entered the house, and closed the door after him.

CHAP. XXIV.

A Discovery of the Heart.

CRANBERRY, it has already been said, never heard, or at least never noticed a sentence that did not sound pleasurably. He did not hold fame at so

high a price as pleasure, nor pleasure of so much worth as consequence; and the consequence on which he loved to pride himself, was not the pureness of his morals, or excellence of his reputation, but the nod of a great man, or the approbation of the multitude. Thus the slander thrown on Rachel's character, the fear of losing Sir Flat's countenance would not suffer him to notice; and the good name he should obtain in the village, if he could become the peacemaker between the baronet and Alfred, induced him to submit to propose himself as the partisan of the man who had aspersed the character of her he pretended to love, and the tempter of Alfred to confess himself to be in the wrong, when he felt him to have acted consistently with honour: but then he felt himself also to have been deficient in that point; and if Alfred allowed that he had been hasty in what he had done, Cranberry would of course be applauded for having restrained himself from falling into the same error.

Foiled in his device, he walked slowly along when left by Alfred, in a state of mind between self-reproach and contrivance; and there we will for a while leave him, and look back to what had occurred to Rachel during the afternoon.

After dinner Rachel proposed to Mrs. Eringham and Emily to walk to Jonathan Parkinson's, but they both declined going out. Rachel had not seen Parkinson that day; and not knowing at what hour she was to be prepared to attend him on the following morning, she set out alone on her walk.

She found him at home, and remained in conversation with him till the evening had stolen upon them unobserved. Parkinson offered himself to be her conductor home to Mrs. Eringham's; but Eugene entering at the moment she was about to depart, was deputed by him to attend her.

She took his arm, and they proceeded some moments in silence, till Eugene, slackening his pace, spoke thus—"Rachel, you have a heart composed of the most exquisite and sensitive feelings."—He paused—"A mind of worth like yours, indexed by
features

features so enchanting, must have had numberless suitors: will you not confess it has been so?"

"To what end this question?" asked Rachel.

"Do you mean by that demand to acknowledge the truth of my question, or to evade answering it?" said Eugene.

"My thoughts," replied Rachel, "were so deeply engrossed by other subjects, that I answered your question almost unconscious of its import."

"But this does not still tell me, whether you are averse to answering it more explicitly."

"You have always so affectionately performed to me the offices of friend and brother united," said Rachel, "that I should but ill return them by a want of confidence in him who has bestowed them."

"Shall I prophesy falsely then in pronouncing your heart subdued?"

"Have you perceived that it is?" said Rachel in an anxious tone.

"Oh no," he returned.

"I thought it impossible you should," replied Rachel in a voice that appeared to be recovering from a fear it had entertained.

"Your language is again equivocal," said he.

Rachel was silent.

Eugene went on, "You have avowed you place confidence in me?"

"The reasons I have given for the faith I place in you, must, I think, convince you I have not professed falsely."

"Well then," said he, "have you ever seen a man with whom you could be happy through life?"

"Our opinions are often fallacious; but I think I almost can affirm I do know a man calculated to bless the woman with whom he is connected."

"May faturity realise your hopes," said Eugene, and with a sigh pressed her hand within his.

"They are not hopes," she replied; "for I know he can never be mine."

Eugene started—"Explain," he said.

She hesitated, then informed him of the paragraph in Mr. Morden's letter, relating to her forming any
matri-

matrimonial connection.

"But," said Eugene, you will doubtless know your parents ere long; they cannot for ever suffer you to live unknown to them, and ignorant of you."

"Still he never shall be mine," she cried, with emphasis.

"Why?" said Eugene.

"There is a reason," she replied, "too forcible for argument to remove, which has long since determined me in regarding him only as a friend."

"Does he know your sentiments?"

"He never asked them."

"Then the passion, when it did exist, was only on your side?"

"I have sometimes been tempted to believe it reciprocal."

"We are not yet talking openly. Do I know him?—Who is he?"

"Pardon me that explanation."

"Is this the confidence, Rachel, which you voluntarily promised to place in me?"

"A secret which would seem to fully another's character, must not be trusted even to the bosom of friendship. Besides, there are secrets which we should be doing an injustice to ourselves to reveal."

"We must have been either the actors or aiders of an injustice, to render this caution necessary."

"Oh, no! we may have conceived an injustice: thought is ungovernable, and will start ideas we never sought after; in such cases there is a secret redress we owe those against whom they were conceived, with which the exposition of our feelings does not seem in unison."

"You are an enigma," said Eugene.

"My solution is integrity," replied she. "I will one day explain myself to you, and remember that you will pronounce my conduct to have been equitable."

"To that day then will I defer an explanation I was about to make to you."

"But in the mean while," said she, "understand that I hold my heart free."

"But

"But not unprepossessed," returned Eugene.—

"It is an exactness almost unattainable, to draw a line between admiration and love."

"How do you so accurately describe my feelings?" asked Rachel.

"Because they are my own."

"Yours?"

"Yes: will you despise me if I confess that brotherly friendship for you has grown into a warmer passion?"

"I am sorry," she answered, "that one so peculiarly the favourite of fortune as yourself, in the increasing regard which Jonathan Parkinsons shows for you, should place any share of his happiness in the power of so destitute a being as myself."

"Are we not equally the children of his adoption?" said he.

"But he knows you derived from a worthy stock. Me! time may prove to be the outcast of beggary—Heaven grant me not of vice!"

"Prove rather the child of poverty than affluence," he cried: "forgive me this selfish wish; but if I once knew you really destitute from birth, I should glory in offering you my protection as a husband; if you prove other, I cannot debase in the opinion of the world her I so tenderly esteem."

"I owe you more than love," returned Rachel; "for this noble disinterestedness; I feel for you all the reverence with which I should greet a parent; all the fervor of friendship, all the affection of sister, but my heart will not meet you with a tenderer interest."

"I am glad it does not," he answered: "for if it did, honour would forbid me to accept your hand. I only wished you to know my sentiments that you might form yours. Time alone can develop whether I shall ever aspire to wish them realised; meanwhile think of what I have said only as the warmth of brotherly affection; I shall not allow my thoughts to wander beyond it."

"I hope you will not," she answered.

"Enough," said he: "there rests the subject;
my

my secret has been drawn prematurely from me ; are you still afraid of disclosing yours ?”

“Your secret concerns only yourself ; mine involves others ; do not ask me to betray them.”

Eugene was silent, and they continued to walk forward some time without speaking ; their road lay through the church-yard : arrived at its gate, Rachel besought Eugene to leave her ; he guessed her meaning, and having wished her good night, departed. She proceeded to the grave of Mr. Morden, over which she was uttering her last farewell, previous to her departure on the following morning, when interrupted by the exclamation of Alfred Eringham. His words verified her suspicions ; she shrieked, she trembled ; a struggling sensation composed of pleasure and self-reproof filled her breast ; and fearing to meet him under the impression of her present feelings, she ran from him, and hid herself behind the church wall. Having remained some minutes in this situation, and not hearing any step approach her, she moved swiftly towards Mrs. Eringham's. She perceived Alfred and Cranberry in conversation before the house, passed by them happy to escape their notice, entered the door, and finding that it was near ten o'clock, she retired to her chamber, excusing her early departure on the pleas of a bad head-ach, and her journey of the following day.

Having locked herself within her chamber, she threw herself into a chair, and began to catechise her heart ; it pleaded guilty, and the summary of its confession was—“That she had seen Alfred Eringham with the eye of preference, from the first moment of her beholding him ; that the passion he had, so shortly after his arrival in Hilden, avowed for Emily Morden, had taught her to aim at subduing the emotion with which her heart had beat towards him ; that she had rejoiced at being absent from Hilden during the time of their courtship, because it had given her an opportunity of recalling her ideas from him ; that Sir Bauble's address to her at the masquerade, and her first sight of his person, had given her to hope, that if his intentions really were

What she at first believed them to be, they might entirely wean over to him her unfortunate prepossession for Alfred; and from this motive she had encouraged the wish of Sir Bauble's intending honourably to address her, which the revival of her own situation on cooler reflection had proved to her that as a man of the world he never would do. When she had discovered his real character, thought had been busy to contrast him with Alfred, a comparison by no means favourable to amending the state of her heart. On her return to Hilden, Alfred had made her the confidant of his declining passion; she heard his confession with concealed emotion, nor believed herself to have been the kindler of a new flame in his breast, though sometimes she had thought it might be so; but his calling upon her name that night, when he knew not that she heard him, brought with it an open conviction of his heart, which she had little expected.

She had loved Alfred Eringham before she had known him to be attached to Emily Morden; her passion was then innocent; after he had declared himself Emily's suitor, she had struggled to subdue her feelings, and had effectually concealed them from the world; would she now then be guilty of a step that would eventually bring upon her general censure for an injustice of the greatest nature to her friend, the child of her benefactor, in accepting that hand which had been long promised to her? She abjured the thought: she could bear to behold the man she esteemed wedded to another, and contain her feelings within the limits of reason and propriety; but she could not hear him declare he loved her, when honour forbade her to listen to his words.

What steps could she pursue?—To what resource could she fly to avoid the dilemma into which she perceived herself about to be thrown?

She had long known Eugene Morden to be her sincere friend. He had that night declared himself her lover. She had been so accustomed to see him in the light of a brother, that she could not for some time consider him in any other view; and when she

did

did convince herself that she had heard his declaration rightly, she could not feel so tenderly for him as she had done for Alfred.

If she was the wife of Eugene, she considered, that Alfred might be induced to return to Emily the tenderness he had once shown for her ; at all events, she would, herself, be spared the pang of refusing to wed where she had really loved ; but then, to give herself to Eugene, and feel her heart to be another's, honour forbade that step. Besides, Eugene had declared that he never would be her husband, if ever he were so, till her real rank in life were proved, lest a connection with him should debase her in the esteem of her relations. Making publicly known the command conveyed to her from her parents in the letter of the deceased Mr. Morden seemed to her the only method left her to avoid hearing from Alfred the declaration she so much dreaded ; and she resolved to make it the topic of her discourse at breakfast on the following morning, and at the same time to express her solemn determination of adhering to its terms.

At a late hour she entered her bed, and laid her head upon her pillow with her heart at rest. Reasoning with her mind had gained aitude of conduct the triumph over an improper inclination, and its victory had communicated to her heart that never-failing satisfaction which results from conscious integrity. She had resolved never, on any condition, or at any instigation, to become the wife of Alfred Eringham, and she had also determined never to give her hand to any man till Alfred was really become as indifferent to her as she wished him to be thought.

CHAP. XXV.

Perplexities.

C RANBERRY walked on for some minutes, full of plans, but unable to determine on any : he soon, however,

however, resolved, that his aim must be to prevent the baronet from risking his life; as in case of his death he should lose the greatest man with whom he ever had been intimate. As to the means of preventing the duel from taking place, he could not so easily fix upon those, since Alfred had refused an apology, and Sir Flat had sworn, "he would sooner go to the devil in a flying leap than retract his words."

The only method that, after much consideration, seemed to promise the effecting of what he wished, was the interposition of a person whose interest with the parties or whose influence from character might have weight to end the dispute without bloodshed. But then he could not think upon any one who was known to both parties. Sir Flat was a stranger to all the village, and Alfred too determined, and too wise to be swayed by arguments of which he did not feel the truth. He believed no one more able to touch the cords of the heart than Jonathan Parkinson, and accordingly wrote to him the following lines:—

"A duel is intended to be fought to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, near the common gate. I am induced to inform you of the intention, as I think that the universal respect attached to your character would be of weight in accommodating the dispute, and that the philanthropy of your heart will not suffer you to omit using your endeavours to that purpose."

I am, with respect,
yours, humbly and faithfully.

E. CRANBERRY."

Parkinson, on reading the note, felt exactly as Cranberry wished he should, and immediately walked into the village to Cranberry's house, late as the hour was, to learn who were the persons concerned, and where he might see them.

On his arrival at the son of Galen's he learnt he was gone some miles from home, to visit a patient who was under inoculation, and whom he had been prevented visiting all that day.

Parkinson knew not where to seek the information

he

he wanted to gain, so contented himself with resolving to be at the common-gate in the morning half an hour before the time appointed for the disputants to meet, and returned home.

Alfred was no sooner left alone by the retiring of his mother and Emily for the night, than Jacob Lamb entered the parlour to him.—“What is the matter, Sir, between you and Mr. Cranberry?” he said—“Something serious, I am afraid?”

“Did you hear our discourse on the road then?”

“Enough of it to raise my apprehensions,” he replied. “Pray, Sir, tell me what it was about.”

“An angel and a devil!” cried Alfred.

“Do, Sir, explain yourself.”

“That boy, that——, he at the Rose and Crown, has called in question the honour of the purest heart that breathes. He has dared to say that Rachel is”——

“What?” interrupted Jacob.

“What he shall repent,” replied Alfred, with emphasis.

“You have the spirit of your worthy father in your heart,” exclaimed Jacob in rapture; “and I can almost think I see him smiling upon you for protecting his poor defenceless niece.”

Alfred recollected the conversation he had heard on the preceding morning; snatched Jacob’s hand, pressed it in his, and, in a voice scarcely articulate, he said, “Niece!—How? For heaven’s sake, tell me!”

Jacob drew his fingers from Alfred’s grasp, clasped his hands, hung down his head, and, in a low voice, “God forgive me!” he cried. “What have I said!”

“That Rachel is my cousin; the niece of my lost father.”

Jacob fell on his knees, and clasped those of Alfred. “By his memory, I conjure you, my dear master, never, never to reveal my words. I have in an unguarded moment, broken a most solemn vow. Promise me that you will not betray me.”

“Explain it to me.”

“Pardon

"Pardon me, Sir; but it is not right in you to ask me, after what I have said."

Alfred stood corrected. "You have excited my curiosity to an intolerable pitch," he replied.

"Prove the virtue of your heart by subduing it. I'll do any thing else for you, only in pity promise me not to divulge this secret."

Alfred remained silent.

"I'll do any thing else you can ask of me," repeated Jacob.

Alfred's spirits became cooled, and thought returned. "Will do!" he exclaimed. "You have already done too much to ask my secrecy; you have a right to claim it. Do not my father and myself owe to your benevolence our very existence?—Tell me the words in which I shall give you my faith."

"Dear, dear, generous youth!" returned Jacob, the tears starting into his eyes, "I may then believe that you will never by any means discover that you are acquainted with this secret?"

"So witness for me heaven."

"God bless you!—he rose—"Now I am sure you are the grandson of my old master."

"I never will speak on the subject of our relationship to any one but you."

"Excuse my bluntness," replied Jacob: "but I never will answer you upon it: I have had a warning to guard my tongue."

Alfred sighed, and was silent; he knew remonstrance to be mean where to change opinion would be to lead into error.

"Are you going to fight this baronet?" said Jacob, reverting to the subject on which their discourse had begun.

"I am."

"You sha'n't risk your life to indulge the humour of a fool-hardy boy; I'll lend you mine."

"How do you mean?"

"To let him fire at me; you are entering into life, I am going out of it—it matters little whether I die by a bullet, or an apothecary's dose."

"Expose *your* life to guard my own!" exclaimed Alfred—

Alfred—"Oh no! I reverence too much my father's benefactor, to set his life upon the cast of chance, for a quarrel of mine."

"It is my quarrel as well as yours," returned Jacob; "it must be if Miss Rachel is the subject, and I will fight him, if I die."

"And the secret may die with him," thought Alfred.—"By heaven you shall not," he cried.

Jacob looked dissatisfied, and said, "Then do you:—you have sworn I shall not, and I must not urge you to break an oath, when the peace of my heart is placed in your keeping one sacred. But you sha'n't meet him alone: I will be your second."

Alfred again took Jacob's hand, and pressed it in his; speak he could not: a silence of some minutes, passed in reflection by both, ensued.

"When do you meet?" asked Jacob.

"At eight in the morning."

"Good night! I'll be at your chamber door at seven."

"Good night, Jacob!—good night!" cried Alfred, and struck his breast in agitation.

"Pray endeavour to keep yourself composed;—this emotion is——"

"In the opinion of the world, cowardice—I know it—I know it. Would I stood single in the world! By heaven I am not a coward for myself; but I may leave a mother and——" He paused, then added in a low voice, "Oh! Rachel!"

"But I shall be left with them."

"Be to them what you have been to me."

"You know I will," said Jacob.

"I did know it, but it affords me an inexpressible satisfaction to hear you declare it." The tears rolled down his cheeks; he struggled to check them, snatched a candle from the table, and ran to his chamber.

END OF VOL. I.



